

TEHRAN TIMES



Appointing special human rights rapporteur for Iran unwarranted

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Kafashian declares Iran's categorical support of the Islamic World's first FIFA World Cup

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
By Shervin Gilani

The excitement of Iran's opening match in the final round of the AFC World Cup qualifiers for Russia 2018 overshadowed an equally important off the field event.

The Qatar Football Association delegation included members of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the organization established by the State of Qatar to oversee all matters related to the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar.

In an exclusive interview with the Tehran Times, the Iranian Football Federation Vice President Ali Kafashian outlined the most important issues discussed with the Supreme Committee's second-in-command Assistant Secretary General Nasser Al-Khater.

What was the purpose of the visit of Mr. Nasser Al Khater and his colleagues?

Ali Kafashian: I have known officials from the Qatar 2022 for a long time. We last met on the sidelines of the 2015 Asian Football Confederation Awards Ceremony in New Delhi, India. I extended an invitation to our friends to come and see for themselves what we have done in the past several years and further discuss mutual points of interest for both parties so far as the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar is concerned.

What are the mutual points of interest between football authorities in Iran and the 2022 organizers in Qatar?

Qatar has always stated that this is a World Cup for the Middle Eastern region. The 2022 tournament will be the first one, staged in an Islamic country.



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Leader declares family polices

POLITICS TEHRAN — Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei declared on Saturday general policies on family to the three

branches of the government under 16 paragraphs, characterizing family as the "cornerstone of the Islamic society." "As the underlying entity and cornerstone of the Islamic society, family is the

locus of growth, human sublimity, and the source of well-being, flourishing, prowess, and spiritual promotion for the country and the establishment..." the Leader stated.

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Tehran says delusional Saudis better off acting 'rational'

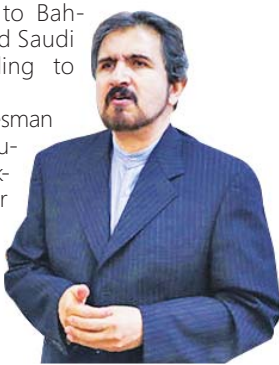
POLITICS TEHRAN — Tehran desk was severely critical on Saturday of comments by Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir who again had accused Iran of backing terrorism, calling his remarks "hackneyed and boring."

"The groundless accusations and unsubstantiated claims by the Saudi officials, particularly those by Mr. al-Jubeir, against the Islamic Republic's constructive and positive role and efforts in the region have become excessively hackneyed and boring," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said in an announcement.

Speaking in the Japanese capital of Tokyo on Friday, Adel al-Jubeir accused Tehran of committing aggressive acts in the Middle East and shipping arms to Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, according to Press TV.

The spokesman called on the Saudi decision-makers to revise their political approach toward the region.

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Iran welcomes reviving Silk Road



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Iran's 4-month handicraft export rises 36% yr/yr

HERITAGE TEHRAN — The value of Iranian handicrafts exports, excluding traditional jewelry and suitcase trade, has witnessed a 36 percent hike in the first four months of the current Iranian calendar year (March 20 - July 21, 2016) compared to the same period last year, an Iranian official announced in a press release on August 31.



A collection of Iranian potteries meticulously inlaid with enamel

Pouya Mahmoudian said highly sought-after handicrafts such as traditional glassware, potteries, ceramics, and kilims (flat tapestry-woven carpets) constituted the lion's share of exports during the term.

Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, and Germany are the main importers of Iranian handicrafts, she added.

Non-oil exports over the said period stood at \$16.30 billion, showing 21.11 percent increase compared to the corresponding period in the preceding year, according to the Iran Customs Administration. Statistics compiled by the Trade Promotion Organization of Iran indicate that 2.8 million tons of handicrafts and handwoven carpets, worth \$92 million, were exported during the first four months of the present Iranian year.

The exports show a 7 percent fall in weight yet a 28 percent rise in value during the same time in the year before.

Trade ties with Iran should be renewed: Lebanese minister

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Lebanese Minister of Industry Hussein al-Haj Hassan stressed that the trade relations between Iran and Lebanon which had been diminished due to the sanctions against the Islamic Republic should be renewed, IRNA reported on Friday.

According to the report, the Lebanese minister made the remarks in the inaugural ceremony of the 19th International Exhibition of Computer, E-commerce, Internet and Office Machinery of Iran (IranCom2016) in the northeastern city of Mashhad on Friday. In the event, he noted that the main goal of his attendance to the exhibition was to remove the barriers of trade relations with Iran. According to Tasnim news agency, the Lebanese minister visited Iran heading a 70-member high-ranking trade delegation to attend the Iran-Lebanon Joint Economic Committee meeting in Tehran. The first meeting of the Committee convened in the Iranian calendar year 1391 (March 2012-March 2013). Since then, the two countries have held six meetings.

Iran, Poland sign MOU to enhance health co-op

SOCIETY TEHRAN — The Iranian health minister inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with his Polish counterpart in Poland on Tuesday, IRNA news agency reported.

Hassan Qazizadeh-Hashemi and Konstany Radziwitt signed the MOU to foster cooperation in healthcare, pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, teaching and research programs.

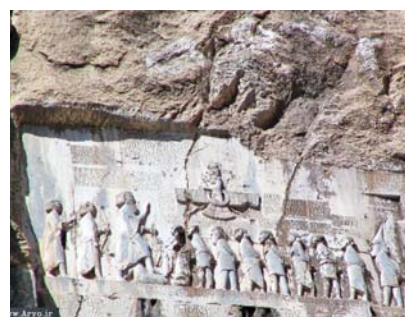


Qazizadeh-Hashemi was also scheduled to pay a visit to the Bioton Co., a Polish company which produce insulin, and attend a conference on investment opportunities along with the companies from both Poland and Iran.

UNESCO experts to hold workshop in Kermanshah

TOURISM TEHRAN — A panel of UNESCO-affiliated experts of cultural heritage will hold a workshop in the western Iranian city of Kermanshah from September 7 to 10, a senior local official said on Wednesday.

Jalil Balai, the director of Kermanshah Cultural Heritage, Tourism, and Handicrafts Department, also expressed hope the event would provide residents with an opportunity to properly introduce their history, culture, and handicrafts to the UNESCO experts.



The Achaemenid-era Behistun Inscription in Bisotun, Kermanshah Province

Practical skills and knowledge for the safeguarding and conservation of cultural heritage relics are amongst the subjects to be touched during the workshop.

The four-day training course will be held adjacent to the Bisotun prehistoric center, which has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list since 2010.

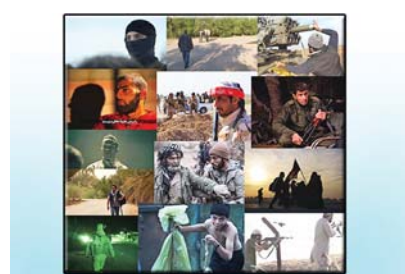
Bisotun linking the Iranian high plateau with Mesopotamia features remains from the prehistoric times to the Median, Achaemenid, Sassanian, and Ilkhanid periods.

Resistance festival to screen films on war in Iraq

ART TEHRAN — Iran's 14th edition of the International Resistance Film Festival (IRFF) plans to screen fourteen documentary and fiction films by Iranian directors on the war against Daesh in Iraq, the organizers announced on Saturday.

Among the films are "The Judgment" directed by Mohammad Esfandiari, "1920" by Farshad Ektesabi, "Day 84" by Mehdi Avaz-zadeh and "Bridge" by Amir-Hossein Noruzi.

The organizers also plan to screen



Clint Eastwood's 2014 drama "American Sniper"

"American Sniper" is a true story about Navy S.E.A.L. sniper, Chris Kyle,

who saves countless lives on the battlefield, turning him into a legend. He serves four tours of duty in Iraq. However, when he finally returns home to his wife and kids, he finds that he can't leave the war behind.

The screening of the film will be followed by a review session by Iranian critic and scholar Majid Shah-Hosseini.

The International Resistance Film Festival will be held in Tehran from September 23 to 30, during the Sacred Defense Week to commemorate the anniversary of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war.

The Tehran Times new pocket-sized glossary is now available on the market. The reader-friendly is a rich source of the most common journalistic terminology collected by the daily's retired staff.

It can benefit a wide range of tastes from students to professional journalists. Persian equivalents have been given for all entries, including idioms and expressions. The glossary also includes example sentences for entries the authors thought it would be a bit difficult to learn.

For more information contact:
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ICC sends team to assess Israel 'justice' system

An International Criminal Court (ICC) team is to visit the Palestinian territories to examine the competence of the Israeli "justice" system to investigate the regime's deadly 2014 war on Gaza.

Should The Hague-based court deem the Israeli judicial authorities incapable of conducting or unwilling to perform a decent investigation of the war, the tribunal would take the matter into its own hands.

The ICC has been considering a visit to the Palestinian territories for more than a year since Palestinian authorities raised a complaint about war crimes committed in the Gaza war and Tel Aviv's ongoing construction of illegal settlements on occupied lands.

On August 24, the Israeli army released a statement saying it had closed 13 criminal investigations into cases of violations against Palestinian civilians by Israeli soldiers during the war without imposing any punitive measures.

An Israeli official reported on Friday that the ICC working group would arrive in the territories "shortly," AFP reported. The official said the visit — which is to take place at the request of ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda — was intended to probe "how the Israeli judicial system works."

The official did not specify if the team would be given access to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

The 50-day Israeli military aggression against Gaza, which ended on August 26, 2014, killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians, including 577 children. Over 11,100 others — including 3,374 children, 2,088 women and 410 elderly people — were also wounded in the war.

Apart from several bloody wars that the Tel Aviv regime has waged against the enclave, it sends its warplanes on sporadic fatal forays over the territory.

The Gaza Strip has also been under an Israeli siege since June 2007. The blockade has caused a decline in the standards of living as well as unprecedented levels of unemployment and unrelenting poverty. (Source: Press TV)

MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS



Iran adamant in supporting Syria: advisor

POLITICS TEHRAN — Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, a foreign policy advisor to the parliament speaker, said on Saturday that Iran will strongly continue backing the Syrian government and people. "Iran's support for Syria will be continued with loud voice till complete defeat of the terrorists," IRNA quoted Amir-Abdollahian as saying.

He added that Iran will continue backing Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The former diplomat also congratulated Syria for victories against the terrorists, he said. He also said that the Syrian Army and popular mobilization forces play an important role in fighting terrorists.



Zarif attends Islam Karimov funeral

POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday attended the funeral ceremony for the late Uzbek President Islam Karimov.

President Hassan Rouhani also sent a message to acting Uzbek President Nigmatilla Yuldashev on Friday offering his condolences over the death of his Uzbek counterpart.

Karimov passed away at the age of 78 after suffering a stroke. He was buried in his home city of Samarkand.

The official announcement of Karimov's death was declared on Friday night. He ruled Uzbekistan for 27 years.



Iraq to open interim consulate in Ilam

POLITICS TEHRAN — Ilam Governor General Mohammad Reza Morvarid has said that Iraq will open a consulate in Ilam province to issue visas for travelers taking part in Arba'een pilgrimage.

"Passing through the Mehran border (in Ilam Province) will be permitted only if the travelers carry passports and visas," Morvarid said, according to Tasnim.

Morvarid further said that seventy percent of pilgrims (nearly two million people), who wanted to enter Iraq last year, were permitted to pass through the Mehran checkpoint.



'Saudi Arabia burning bridges with Iran madly'

POLITICS TEHRAN — Mohsen Rezaee, secretary of the Expediency Council, has said that Saudi Arabia is "burning the bridges" with Iran in a crazy way.

"Our relations with Saudi Arabia is deteriorating day by day and they want to burn the bridges. They are burning the bridges madly," he tweeted on Saturday.

Rezaee said on Friday that Ahmed Shaheed, the special UN rapporteur on human rights in Iran, has embedded his latest report on the human rights situation in Iran with a pack of "lies" to present it to the European Parliament in days.



Top Japanese official visits Tehran to discuss ties

POLITICS TEHRAN — Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kentaro Sonoura is in Tehran for talks with senior Iranian officials.

The Japanese official on Saturday met with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi to discuss issues of mutual interests.

Sonoura's visit to Tehran comes seven months after Iran and Japan signed an investment agreement to expand economic ties. Based on the agreement, Japanese companies will have better access to Iranian market compared to other international companies.



French National Assembly president to visit Iran soon: envoy

POLITICS TEHRAN — The Iranian ambassador to Paris said on Saturday that President of the National Assembly Claude Bartolone plans to visit Iran soon.

Ali Ahani also said a plan is underway to arrange a trip by French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault to Iran.

Bartolone was scheduled to take a trip to Iran on July 16. However, the trip was canceled because of a bloody terrorist attack in the French city of Nice.

Leader declares family polices



In its push toward what the Leader termed a "family-based society," the country should focus on the ensuing guidelines:

1. Establishing a family-based society and reinforcing and strengthening family and its main functions on the basis of an Islamic model of family

2. Considering family as a pivotal entity in regulations and laws, executive policies, and all educational, cultural, social, and economic systems, particularly the housing and urban development

3. Highlighting the functions of family-mosque links to preserve and promote the Islamic and national identity as well as family and society

4. Forming a nationwide movement to facilitate and disseminate successful marriage for girls and boys and all of those at marriage age through enforcing supportive policies and culture-making

5. Strengthening family and promoting its social capital on the basis of fairness, satisfaction, friendship, and respect

6. Offering and working out the Islamic model of family and boosting the Islamic-Iranian life style

7. Revising, rectifying, and completing the judicial system and the relevant procedures in connection with family



8. Creating a healthy environment and observing Islamic norms in relations between men and women

9. Promoting living and economic

Leader says, "As the underlying entity and cornerstone of the Islamic society, family is the locus of growth, human sublimity, and the source of well-being, flourishing, prowess, and spiritual promotion for the country and the establishment..."

Tehran says delusional Saudis better off acting 'rational'



"Saudi Arabia would be better off reconsidering its behavior in the region seriously, and it is necessary that rationality replace illusion."

Saudis' blame game is increasingly losing force, Iran says, as the people in the region have come to grips with the behind-the-scene realities.

"Today, more than before, the public opinion have come to know the hidden reality of the region and main causes of instability and insecurity, and propaganda and distortion of realities are no longer able to deceive the informed and vigilant conscience," Qassemi said in the statement carried on the Foreign Ministry website.

He added, "It is the Saudi government that needs to change its incorrect and unconstructive approach in the region and across the world and, while it is needed to cease strikes against the unprotected Yemeni women and children, it should stop backing terrorist groups in regional countries, particularly in Syria."

Relationship between Iran and Saudi Arabia have been strained over a number of issues, particularly over

Syria, where the two back opposing sides in the now five-year conflict.

The two states have had no direct political contact when Saudi Arabia severed its ties with Tehran after an Iranian mob attacked the Saudi diplomatic posts in Tehran and Mashhad following the kingdom's execution of

"The groundless accusations and unsubstantiated claims by the Saudi officials, particularly those by Mr. al-Jubeir, against the Islamic Republic's constructive and positive role and efforts in the region have become excessively hackneyed and boring," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi notes.

a top Saudi Shiite cleric in January.

Contrary to Tehran who backs the Syrian government via its advisory role in the Syrian battlefield, Riyadh is seeking to topple it.

"The advisory presence of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Syria and its spiritual and political supports for the innocent people of some regional Islamic countries afflicted by the unbridled barbarity and violence of Takfiri-terrorist groups works toward preserving stability and security in the region..." part of the announcement read.

Qassemi further called on all regional countries to orchestrate a concerted push toward restoring peace and stability to the beleaguered Middle East.

"...all regional countries are expected to make efforts to restore security and calmness and prevent more killing of the Yemeni people through adopting a positive approach and acting constructively and practically."

According to the announcement, Iran's top priorities are security in the region, the annihilation of terrorism, preservation of the territorial integration of all countries, unity of the Islam world, and peace and stability in the region.

Riyadh has not compensated Mina victims: official

POLITICS TEHRAN — Deputy Culture Minister for Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Hossein Nooshabadi has said Saudi Arabia has not paid a

penny as a compensation to families of the victims of Masjid al-Haram and the Mina disaster, Mehr reported on Saturday.

Although Iranian officials have been

pursuing the rights of the Mina crush victims, the Saudis have not taken necessary measures to account for the Mina tragedy," Nooshabadi remarked.

At least 769 people lost their lives in a stampede at the holiest Muslim pilgrimage site on September 24 last year. Among the victims were 464 Iranians.

Tehran condemns terrorist attacks in Pakistan



POLITICS TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi on Saturday strongly condemned terrorist attacks in Peshawar, Pakistan.

"Given the unpleasant events in the region, the Islamic Republic of Iran is more than ever on the belief that defeat of extremism and terrorism is only possible through a consensus and collaborative cooperation," Qassemi remarked.

It is not possible to counter terrorism without paying attention to roots of extremism and fighting perpetrators in spreading terrorism and extremism, he added.

Qassemi expressed sympathy with the Pakistani government and families of the victims.

Two explosions outside a court complex in northwest Pakistan on Friday left at least 12 people killed and dozens wounded.

Hours before the blasts, militants killed two people in a Christian neighborhood in the same region.

Both attacks were claimed by Jamaat-ur-Ahrar, a breakaway Pakistani Taliban faction, Reuters reported.

According to the Indian Press, the attack comes in line with earlier attacks on minorities in Pakistan. In August 2016, at least four Hindus were killed in individual strikes in what were called religiously motivated attacks. Hindus, Christians and Ahmadiyya Community are the minorities that are often the targets of religiously motivated attacks.

Iran says welcomes reviving Silk Road



POLITICS TEHRAN — Ali Akbar Velayati, the senior foreign policy advisor to the Leader, said on Saturday that Iran welcomes cooperation with China to revive the Silk Road.

"Some countries may not agree on reviving the Silk Road, however Iran has no problem in this respect," Velayati told a forum of Silk Road mayors held in the city of Qazvin, northwest of Tehran.

He also said that Iran is interested in expanding economic and political relations with China.

Velayati, a former foreign minister who is the current president of the Expediency Council Center for Strategic Research, said Tehran is seeking "stra-

tegic ties" with China.

Velayati said that Iran and China are adopting "closer" position in their foreign policies, citing the two countries' stances on Syria as an example.

Velayati said that Iran as the "safest" country in the Middle East links East Asia with Europe and Africa.

"Security is an important issue and a prerequisite for investment in reviving the Silk Road and Iran has no problem in this regard," he explained.

He expressed hope that the Silk Road summit would bring many achievements.

The 11th international summit of the Silk Road started in Qazvin on Saturday and will end on Sunday.

Appointing special human rights rapporteur for Iran unwarranted: official

POLITICS TEHRAN — The head of Iran's High Council for Human Rights has said appointing a special human rights rapporteur for Iran is unwarranted and unjustified.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has always maintained a principled stance on the appointment of special rapporteur for a country and links this to double standards and arbitrary approaches of some specific countries within the framework of the (UN) Human Rights Council," said

Mohammad Javad Larjani on Saturday.

The human right official made the remarks in reply to a reporter asking about introducing a new rapporteur for Iran now that Ahmed Shaheed is nearing the end of his term.

Ahmed Shaheed will be stepping down in November one year earlier before his Iranian mission ends. He will be replaced by human rights activist Asma Jahangir, a Pakistani national.

Ahmed Shaheed said in his twitter account on Wednesday that Jahangir will replace him.

In his March 2016 report, Ahmad Shaheed called on Iran to, inter alia, consider a moratorium on "the use of death penalty," ease crackdown on "freedom of expression and opinion," and leave "journalists, lawyers, religious minorities and individuals" with more leeway to "defend the rights of women, children, workers, and ethnic minorities."

Russian, Japanese leaders express new resolve to settle island row

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Russian President Vladimir Putin on Saturday spoke of their joint resolve to settle once and for all a territorial row over a string of tiny islands that has marred ties for more than seven decades.

In a speech delivered at a business conference in the Russian port city of Vladivostok, with Putin in attendance, Abe urged Putin to work with him to solve the dispute.

"As the leader of Japan, I am firmly convinced of the correctness of the Japanese position, while you, Vladimir, as the leader of Russia, are entirely confident of the correctness of the Russian position," Abe said.

"Yet, if we continue on like this, this very same discussion will continue for yet more decades to come. By leaving the situation as it is, neither you nor I will be able to leave better possibilities to future generations."

Japan claims a string of Russia-controlled western Pacific islands, called the Northern Territories in Japan and Southern Kuriles in Russia.

The territorial row over the island



chain, seized by Soviet troops at the end of World War Two, has upset diplomatic relations ever since, precluding a formal peace treaty between the two countries.

Putin said he was ready to take decisive steps to settle the dispute, though he cautioned that those steps could only be taken after careful preparation.

"The past should not be an obstacle

to moving forward," Putin said during a question-and-answer session at the forum, where he shared the stage with Abe.

"We have to think how to get rid of problems which do not allow us to move forward."

"I hope that we can solve these problems. In order to solve them we of course need a level of trust. It's a tricky solution

but we can achieve it."

On Friday, the Japanese prime minister held talks with Putin and agreed to have two more summit meetings by the end of the year to accelerate peace treaty negotiations.

"Vladimir, in order to carve out towards the future bilateral relations overflowing with unlimited potential, I am resolved to putting forth all my strength to advance the relationship between Japan and Russia, together with you," Abe said.

Abe's father, Shintaro Abe, worked to resolve the dispute in the 1980s as foreign minister.

Concessions over the islands would carry risks for Putin but could boost Japanese investment in Russia at a time when Moscow, battered by low global oil prices and Western sanctions, badly needs an injection of cash.

"The economies of Russia and Japan are not in rivalry. I am fully confident that ours is a relationship in which each complements the other in a magnificent way," Abe said.

(Source: Reuters)

EU needs U.S.-style border controls & warning systems: Merkel

Almost a year since Germany announced its open-door refugee policy, Angela Merkel has defended her decision. In the wake of terrorist attacks in the European Union and to better deal with any further refugee influx, she proposed introducing the United States-modeled border controls.

On September 4, 2015, the German Chancellor made an epic policy decision which resulted in over one million refugees flocking into Germany by the end of the year. The move by the EU's largest economy has sparked a downward spiral for the EU-wide migration policy.

Merkel's decision impacted the entire European Union with some Schengen countries, forced to close their borders in light of the massive refugee influx. To aid and somewhat correct the situation, Merkel rallied the EU countries to agree to a €6 billion (\$6.6bn) deal with Turkey to reduce the illegal refugee flows in exchange for an eventual promise for Ankara to potentially join the EU.

While focusing on external protection of borders, Merkel arguably contributed to the demise of the EU as we know it when Britain opted to leave the Union in June. As cases of refugee violence, rape and attacks intensified over the course of last year, and EU unable to agree on migrant quotas, Merkel defended her initial position in an interview with the German Bild newspaper.

Claiming her welcome was "misunderstood," she explained that her "point was not to open the borders for everybody – but rather not to close them for those people who... had started their trek to us... on foot," Merkel said, as quoted by Business Insider.

Answering "no" to whether or not she regrets announcing the German open door policy, Merkel also defended the EU-Turkey deal which went into effect in March. This as tensions between Ankara and the union continue to rise, with European politicians warning that the EU must not allow itself to be bullied by Turkey over the migrant deal.

Bringing up shortcomings of the refugee camps in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, she said that Turkey's approximately 3 million refugees were "left alone by us for too long."

"This is why the agreement between the EU and Tur-

key was, and is, so important. It is the only way to stop the traffickers and to be in a better position to help people."

"With the EU-Turkey agreement, we managed to stem the traffickers' activities and to save human lives – which is our most important aim," she explained.

The landmark deal agreed by the two sides in March is aimed at returning all illegal migrants reaching Greece from Turkey's shores. In exchange, the EU would take in thousands of Syrian refugees "legally" and directly from Turkey. The EU would also give Turkey €6 billion (US\$6.7bn) in funding over the next five years.

The deal also envisaged an accelerated process for Turkey's EU accession, and visa-free travel to the Schengen Zone for its citizens. However, the visa-free agreement has failed to come to fruition, despite a plan to introduce it in July, as Turkey has failed to comply with all of the EU's 72 criteria – a sticking point of which is a requirement that Ankara relax its stringent anti-terrorism legislation.

The Chancellor said that positive results came out of the migration crisis, namely a better understanding on how to proceed with the largest migration to Europe since World War II.

"We have created a common European Agenda on Migration. Everyone has to contribute to it. It is, therefore, important that, for example, Poland participates in protecting the external borders, in the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) mission in the Aegean, and in foreign aid. The question of who should take in how many refugees needs further discussion," Merkel told Bild.

Merkel also went on to stress that fighting the root causes of refugee numbers is not Europe's task alone but "entire world's humanitarian responsibility."

Asked about the Ansbach and Wurzburg ISIL-inspired terrorist attacks this summer, Merkel said that while Germany has been exposed to the threat of extremist fundamentalism, the "terrorism represents great challenges for our security services."

In fact, in two major terrorist attacks in Germany this summer, German's Federal Office for Migration and Ref-



ugees failed to account for migrants' extremist motives.

Mohammed Daleel was due to be deported when he detonated a bomb in the Bavarian town of Ansbach on 24 July. The bomber was a 27-year-old Syrian refugee who had pledged allegiance to the leader of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh). While Daleel was the only fatality in the incident, 15 civilians were also injured in the blast.

On 18 July 2016, a 17-year-old refugee injured five people when he attacked passengers with a knife and hatchet on a train near Wurzburg. German authorities later discovered that Ahmadzai was also in contact with members of the terrorist organization. Media reports suggested that the 17-year-old Afghan male arrived in Germany as an unaccompanied child refugee in 2015.

The Ansbach and Wurzburg attacks Merkel said have shown that Germany needs a better early warning system, while the EU needs border controls similar to those in the United States.

"On the European level, we should start working on an electronic entry control system modeled on the U.S. system. This means that – regardless of whether they travel visa-free or not – anyone who enters a European country and who leaves again is registered so that you know exactly who has not left and is still somewhere in the Schengen Area," Merkel said.

(Source: RT)

'U.S. supporting Saudi strikes in Yemen'

The Leader of Yemen's Ansarullah (Houthi) movement has censured the United States for providing logistical support and political cover for the House of Saud regime bombardment campaign against Yemen, which has killed thousands of people and displaced many more in the impoverished country.

"The United States plays a major role in the aggression... including logistical support for air and naval strikes, providing various weapons... and providing complete political cover for the aggression, including protection from pressure by human rights groups and the United Nations," Abdul-Malik Badreddin al-Houthi said.

He further lambasted the negotiators loyal to the resigned President, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, for the failure of the United Nations-brokered peace talks on the Yemeni conflict in Kuwait last month, arguing the Saudi-backed delegates did not understand the meaning of real dialogue.

"The hurdle facing negotiations and dialogue is that the other party wants to achieve through the talks what it wanted to achieve through war, not understanding that the path of dialogue and peace is different from the path of war," Abdul-Malik Badreddin pointed out.

Abdul-Malik Badreddin's remarks came on the same day that the House of Saud regime's military aircraft launched two separate airstrikes against residential



neighborhoods in Yemen, killing nearly a dozen civilians.

At least four women and five children lost their lives on Friday after Saudi fighter jets struck an area in the Arhab district of the western Yemeni province of Sana'a.

Earlier on Friday, a civilian was killed and three others were wounded after Saudi warplanes pounded a cultural center in the adjacent coastal province of Hudaydah.

■ **'Yemeni snipers kill two Saudi troops'**

Yemeni army soldiers have reportedly launched retaliatory attacks against Saudi border guards in Saudi Arabia's southwestern border region of Asir, leaving two soldiers dead.

Yemeni snipers fatally shot two Saudi troops in al-Rabu'ah town of the region

on Saturday morning, Lebanon-based al-Mayadeen television news network reported.

A Saudi regime's military vehicle also went up in flames after Yemeni soldiers and their allies targeted it with a guided missile at a camp in the same southwestern Saudi city.

The attacks were in retaliation for Riyadh's relentless aerial bombardment campaign against Yemen.

Earlier, the media bureau of the operations command in Yemen released footage showing locally designed and manufactured Borkan-1 (Volcano-1) missile blasting off from a launcher deployed in an unknown location in Yemen.

The solid propellant and Scud-type missile reportedly hit a stationary target in the Saudi city of Ta'if, located more

than 700 kilometers (434 miles) south-east of the capital, Riyadh.

Also on Saturday, Saudi military aircraft struck a car as it was traveling along a road in Baqim district of Yemen's mountainous northwestern province of Sa'ada, leaving one civilian dead and four others wounded.

Saudi fighter jets also carried out two airstrikes against al-Nahdin district in the northern Yemeni province of Sana'a. There were no immediate reports about the number of casualties and the extent of damage caused.

The House of Saud regime has been incessantly pounding Yemen since March 2015, with the United Nations putting the death toll from the military aggression at about 10,000. The offensive was launched to reinstate Hadi and to crush the Ansarullah movement and their allies.

The Ansarullah movement fighters took the state matters into their own hands in the wake of Hadi's resignation and escape, which threw Yemen into a state of uncertainty and threatened a total security breakdown in the country, where an al-Qaeda affiliate is present.

UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Yemen Jamie McGoldrick said last month the toll could rise even further as some areas had no medical facilities, and that people were often buried without any official record being made.

(Source: agencies)

U.S., China ratify Paris climate agreement



The United States has joined China to formally ratify the Paris agreement to curb climate-warming emissions, the world's two biggest economies said on Saturday, which could help put the pact into force before the end of the year.

The U.S. President Barack Obama and Chinese President Xi Jinping submitted their plan to join the agreement to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who is in China to witness the announcement.

Senior Obama adviser Brian Deese said the joint declaration should push other countries to formally join the agreement.

"The signal of the two large emitters taking this step together and taking it early, far earlier than people had anticipated a year ago, should give confidence to the global communities and to other countries that are working on their climate change plans, that they too can move quickly and will be part of a global effort," Deese told reporters on Friday.

India is also poised to join the agreement this year, Deese said, adding that Obama was expected to meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of a Group of 20 nations meeting in Hangzhou, China, this weekend.

Obama and Xi committed to cooperate on two other global environmental agreements this year - an amendment to the Montreal Protocol to phase down air-conditioning refrigerants and on a market-based measure to reduce carbon emissions from aviation.

"Today's announcement is the strongest signal yet that what we agreed in Paris will soon be the law of the land," said Mattlan Zackhras, minister-in-assistance to the president of the Marshall Islands.

"With the two biggest emitters ready to lead, the transition to a low-emissions, climate-resilient global economy is now irreversible."

Saturday's joint statement could spur further ratifications by the likes of Brazil and Canada.

"We expect a surge of ratifications around the UN Climate week later in September," said Bill Hare, chief executive of Climate Analytics.

In Paris last December, nearly 200 countries agreed on a binding global compact to slash greenhouse gases and keep global temperature increases to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius.

Experts have said the temperature target is already in danger of being breached, with the UN's weather agency saying 2016 is on course to be the warmest year since records began.

While 180 countries have now signed the agreement, 55 nations - covering at least 55 percent of global emissions - need to formally ratify the treaty to put it into legal effect.

Before China and the United States, 23 nations had ratified - including North Korea - but they collectively accounted for just 1.08 percent of global emissions, according to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

China represents just over 20 percent of global emissions while the United States accounting for 17.9 percent, Russia 7.5 percent and India 4.1 percent.

The announcement is a major diplomatic achievement for the U.S. president, who ends his term in January.

But the ability of the United States to achieve its Paris targets could be affected by the outcome of a federal court hearing this month, in which 27 U.S. states are trying to block the federal Clean Power Plan that slashes CO2 from power plants, the largest source of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions.

The U.S. Republican Party Platform has also questioned the legality of the executive order used to ratify the Paris deal, saying it will need the consent of the Senate before it becomes binding.

Li Shuo, a climate adviser with Greenpeace, said both China and the United States were determined to put the treaty into force as soon as possible in order to avoid the risk that any new Republican administration would reject it.

"It now looks like the Paris agreement will enter into force before the end of the year and that will really be light speed compared to almost all other international agreements," he said.

The U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton is a strong supporter of the accord, but her Republican counterpart Donald Trump has dismissed man-made climate change as a hoax and says he will abandon the Paris agreement if elected.

Countries that ratify the deal will have to wait for three years after it has gone into legal force before they can begin the process of withdrawing from it, according to the agreement signed in Paris.

Ratification, however, does not mean the work is over. Alden Meyer, international director of the Union of Concerned Scientists, said the Paris agreement's detailed rules will likely take another year or two to finalize.

"All countries will need to raise the ambition of their commitments under the agreement if we're to avoid the worst impacts of climate change and reach a goal of net zero global warming emissions by mid-century," Meyer said.

"But this is an important step forward that reinforces the U.S. and China's continued leadership in building a robust, durable international climate framework."

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS

Productivity should account for 35% of Iran's economic growth by 2021

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Head of National Iranian Productivity Organization (NIPO) Roya Tabatabaie Yazdi underscored that 35 percent of the country's economic growth provisioned in the sixth Five-Year National Development Plan (2016-2021) should be achieved via improving productivity in Iran.

As she told IRNA, if the Islamic Republic state cannot reach its set eight percent economic growth by 2021, the other goals of the set development plan would be undermined.

"According to the sixth development plan, 35 percent of the targeted eight-percent economic growth should be achieved via improvement of productivity; therefore, productivity rate in Iran should be improved by 2.8 percent per annum," she added.



Iranian trade delegation to visit Switzerland in few weeks

ECONOMY TEHRAN — A group of Iranian businessmen to be headed by Pedram Soltani, the deputy chief of Iran Chamber of Commerce, Industries, Mines and Agriculture (ICCIMA), will embark for Switzerland in late September, the chamber's website announced. The visit will take place on September 20-23 and the Iranian delegation is scheduled to attend two economic forums in Geneva and Zurich and will also hold business talks with Swiss firms.

As reported, the delegation will include representatives from various businesses such as tourism, heavy industries, machine manufacturing, banking, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and aeronautics.

Iran and Switzerland are mulling over potential areas of cooperation now that Tehran is emerging from economic sanctions. As reported in June, an engineering company from

Geneva became the first Swiss firm to win a contract with Iran's oil and gas industries.

In addition, expansion of bilateral ties, particularly in the economic sector, was a major theme of the mid-June meeting between Iran Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi and Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter.

In that meeting, the two sides shared ideas on the implantation of the nuclear deal as well as other relevant issues such as the banking row.

Italian economy stagnated in Q2

It has been confirmed Italy's economy stagnated in the period from April to June – not growing at all from the first three months of the year.



The government statistics bureau's latest assessment shows a fall in domestic demand which offset export growth.

However compared with the second quarter last year, growth was revised up slightly to 0.8 percent from the original 0.7 percent estimate.

Investments, which have languished in recent years, and consumer spending, both made a zero contribution to quarterly growth.

Italy's economy has been among the most sluggish in the eurozone for more than a decade.

Analysts expect growth to be below one percent this year and even weaker next year.

The stagnant quarterly growth rate marked a sharp slowdown from the 0.3 percent rate seen between January and March, and will disappoint the government.

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said on Thursday he expected the flat reading would be revised up to show some modest growth, echoing previous comments from the economy ministry. (Source: Euronews)

Tehran hosting 4 intl. expos

ECONOMY TEHRAN — The Iranian capital is simultaneously hosting four international exhibitions from September 3 to 6 at the Tehran Permanente International Fairground, IRNA reported on Saturday.

The four international exhibitions include international exhibitions on apparel, floor covering and textile besides Green Trade Fair.

As reported, 48 Iranian firms and 39 foreign ones are showcasing their latest products in the 4th edition of International Apparel Exhibition (Iran Mode).

Also, 129 Iranian companies, and five foreign ones from Taiwan, Turkey, and China are attending the 8th International Floor Covering, Moquette, Machine Made Carpet and Related Industries Exhibition.



In addition, the 22nd International Exhibition of Textile Machinery, Raw Materials, Embroidery Machines, and Textile Products is hosting 138 Iranian companies and 432 foreign ones from 15 countries including Germany, Austria, Spain, England, Italy, Belgium, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Japan, Singapore, France, China, India, and South Korea.

Moreover, some 64 Iranian companies and 11 foreign ones from Germany, Ethiopia, Italy, Belgium, Turkey, France, China, Lithuania, the Netherlands, India, and Kenya are taking part in Iran Green Trade Fair (IGTF). IGTF has been developed to bring the Iranian and international horticulture industries together, to boost Iran's production of vegetables, fruits, flower and plants.

In fresh isle talks, Abe and Putin agree to Japan summit, economic deal in December

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to hold a summit in Nagato, Yamaguchi Prefecture, in December where they are expected to finalize some Japanese economic proposals and continue talks on the fate of four Russia-held islands off Hokkaido that have held back bilateral ties for decades.

"I believe the development of the Far East region, with its big potential, is Russia's top priority issue," Abe said at the outset of the meeting on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum in the Pacific port city of Vladivostok.

"The growth of the Asia-Pacific leads the global economy. Japan, as Russia's neighbor, will promote Japan-Russia cooperation in the region strongly," Abe said.

"It is important that the governments support the initiatives of the private sector," Putin said.

The summit in Nagato, Abe's home constituency, will be held on Dec. 15, preceded by another bilateral meeting in November at the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference in Peru.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the two leaders would continue talks on the territorial row and publicize the results before year's end.

At the meeting, Abe was to offer a comprehensive energy aid package, including oil and natural gas development in the Far East and East Siberia, and technology exchanges for decommissioning nuclear power plants, the Nikkei business daily reported Friday. The trade ministry is also considering offering up to ¥1 trillion in funding for Russia's state-run oil company Rosneft, it said.

Ahead of the summit, Putin, in an interview Thursday, struck a conciliatory tone on the territorial row that has prevented the

countries from inking a World War II peace treaty.

Resolving the conflict over four islands occupied by the former Soviet Union in the final days of the war should be part of "setting the stage for the development of inter-governmental relations for the long term," Putin said in an interview as he prepared to meet Abe at the forum. "We're not talking about some exchange or some sale, we are talking about finding a solution where neither of the parties would feel defeated or a loser."

Russia is seeking warmer relations with Japan to woo investment as progress on deepening business ties with China has stalled. The two leaders are discussing the islands, called the Northern Territories by Japan and the Southern Kurils by Russia, for the second time this year after Abe met with Putin in the Black Sea resort of Sochi in May,

snubbing an appeal by U.S. President Barack Obama not to visit. Putin plans to travel to Japan in December, the Kremlin said Tuesday, though that could not be confirmed.

Trade with China, Russia's biggest single partner, contracted 28 percent to \$63.6 billion last year, compared with the countries' joint target of \$100 billion. Turnover with Japan, Russia's eighth-largest partner, declined by almost 31 percent to \$21.3 billion, with commodities accounting for more than three-quarters of Russian exports by value, according to the customs service in Moscow.

During Friday's talks, the two leaders were expected to discuss Japan's eight-point economic cooperation plan presented to Putin in May, with Tokyo hoping such an offer will prompt the Kremlin to soften its stance in the territorial dispute.

(Source: The Japan Times)

The economy since the Brexit referendum: Fact and fiction

After Britain voted to leave the European Union on June 23rd, financial markets took fright. Sterling lost one-tenth of its value in two days of trading. The FTSE 250, an index of domestically focused firms, fell by 14 percent. Remainers predicted that Leave voters would soon suffer from an acute case of buyer's remorse. Yet as the summer has worn on, the mood has changed. Companies have not fled Britain en masse. The pound has stabilized and the FTSE 250 is up on its pre-referendum level. Polls suggest that few Brexiters regret their vote: indeed, many of them now argue that the pre-referendum doom-mongering was overblown, and some even detect the beginning of a "Brexit boom". What is the reality?

Some of the gloomier pre-referendum forecasts ignored the possibility that the authorities would respond to a Leave vote by propping up the economy. In the event, the Bank of England loosened monetary policy six weeks after the referendum, a widely anticipated move that nonetheless boosted confidence. The new government of Theresa May quickly made clear that it would tone down the fiscal austerity of its predecessor.

Nor did wonks foresee that Brexit would take so long to get under way. During the referendum campaign David Cameron implied that Britain would begin the process of withdrawal from the EU immediately, in the case of a Leave vote. Instead he left the job to his successor. Mrs May said negotiations will not begin until 2017; only on August 31st did she convene a cabinet meeting to discuss the broad shape of Brexit. Bookmakers reckon there is a 40 percent chance that Britain will not leave the EU before 2020. Those who are pleasantly surprised by Brexit's consequences should bear in mind that it has not yet happened.

Still, in the short term the economy seems to be faring better than some economists had



predicted. Consumer spending appears to be healthy. In July retail sales rose by 4 percent compared with the year before. But the fact that they grew by the same amount in September 2008, the month that Lehman Brothers collapsed and thus precipitated the global financial crisis, should give pause for thought. Consumers do not immediately internalize bad economic news: the man on the street is not thinking about Article 50 of the EU treaty as he enters a shopping center. And more than half of Britons clearly never saw Brexit as bad news in the first place.

For a better gauge of the future of the economy, look at the behavior of companies. Before the referendum, economists' main worry was that firms would hold back on expensive, hard-to-reverse decisions while Britain's future relationship with the EU was sorted out. The two big questions concern jobs and investment.

Growth in business credit has markedly slowed. The Bank of England's latest survey of business confidence indicates that planned

investment is being reined in. In July the value of contracts in the infrastructure industry fell by 20 percent compared with June, based on a three-month rolling average, according to Barbour ABI, a consultancy. As businesses hold back on investment, productivity will slow and, with it, wages.

Data from Adzuna, a job-search firm, show that in July wages and vacancies fell compared with June. (A higher rate of inflation linked to the weak pound is eating further into real earnings.) The number of advertised low-paid and contract roles has grown, as employers seek to plug gaps without committing to permanent hires. The Economist's model analyzing Google searches for "jobseekers", which is correlated with official unemployment back to 2004, suggests that unemployment is now around 5.3 percent, higher than the official rate of 4.9 percent last recorded for April-June.

What of exports, which Brexiters forecast would soar following a fall in the pound? A survey of manufacturing firms on Septem-

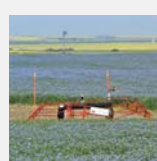
ber 1st showed strong growth in sales to places like America and China. Yet hopes of an export boom should be tempered. A high proportion of exports' content is made up of imports, which are now pricier. And British exports compete mainly on "non-price" factors, such as quality and customer service, making them insensitive to currency fluctuations. When sterling fell by a similar amount in 2008-09, net exports barely responded.

Britain now hopes to avoid entering recession, as many, including the Treasury, forecast before the vote. It partly depends on what Philip Hammond, the chancellor, announces in his autumn statement, a mini-budget due later in the year. To support the economy he will have to loosen the current fiscal plans considerably. His predecessor, George Osborne, penciled in a reduction in the cyclically adjusted budget deficit in 2017 of about 1 percent of GDP, a sharp contraction even by the standards of recent years. Mr Hammond could help by cancelling this austerity. He is likely to announce a round of spending on infrastructure.

Such policy decisions may yet fend off recession. But deploying a fiscal boost would not be costless, with Britain's public-debt-to-GDP ratio already running at 84 percent. Nor is ever-looser monetary policy, given the damage it does to pension funds. And consider the counterfactual. Before the referendum many economists had predicted a boost to growth in the event of a vote for Remain, as a big source of uncertainty was removed. The Bank of England had forecast growth of 2.3 percent in 2017, but now expects just 0.8 percent. Following the vote to Leave, the government and the bank have been forced to use monetary and fiscal policy just to try to keep growth in positive territory. And Brexit itself, of course, is still to come.

(Source: Brexit)

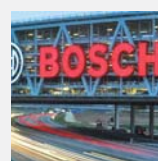
NEWS IN BRIEF



Toyota, Encana energy deal devolves into legal battle

Japanese auto maker Toyota Motor Corp.'s supply and trading arm, Toyota Tsusho Corp., made an ill-timed bet on Canadian natural gas, inking a \$500 million deal with Canada's Encana Corp. in 2012 to develop gas-rich lands in southern Alberta. Two years after the market for such joint ventures collapsed, the deal has devolved into a court battle over who owns the underlying assets.

Deals pairing an outside investor with an energy producer became a popular way of financing new wells a few years ago. Several such agreements have been struck in the U.S. and Canada, many with foreign investors eager to tap into the unfolding shale boom.



Bosch to recruit 3,000 engineers in India

Auto components major Bosch said it would be recruiting about 3,000 engineers in India this year.

"We are also rapidly increasing our local engineering and development, this year we will recruit over 3,000 engineers in India," President Bosch Group India and Managing Director Bosch Ltd Steffen Berns said. He said Bosch had commenced the hiring, majority of which would be in software and it would be country wide.

Bosch opened the first phase of expansion of its development centre in Aduvodi here in the presence of Karnataka Minister for Medium & Large Industries R V Deshpande and Minister for Transport Ramalinga Reddy.



Samsung shares fall over galaxy note fears

Shares in Samsung have fallen after it delayed shipments of its latest smartphone - but without giving a detailed reason for the decision.

Samsung said: "Shipments of the Galaxy Note 7 are being temporarily delayed for additional quality assurance inspections."

There are reports in South Korea and the US of the Galaxy Note 7 "exploding" either during or just after charging.

However, it is unclear whether the delay is because of these reports.

Pictures and videos shared online depict charred and burnt handsets.

Highlights of CII Achievements (From 2013 to 2015) at a Glance



Central Insurance of Iran (CII) has taken giant steps for growth of insurance industry and consequently, economic and social promotion of the country since 1392 (March 20, 2013 – March 19, 2014).

The most important achievements of CII are as follows:

- Compiling and formulating strategic objectives document, strategic and operational measures in tandem with policies of "resistance economy" and in line with materializing objectives of "resistance economy", prioritizing strategies defined by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (MEAF), tracing and following up necessary measures the degree of each of strategic objectives and corresponding steps taken in each three periods since 2013 up to the end of 1394 (March 20,

2015 – March 19, 2016) along with monitoring activities during three-month period, etc. with due observance to the said issue, all these activities have been done in recent three years and followed up strictly.

- The situation of macro indicators of insurance industry from 2013 to 2015 is shown in below table which indicates general improvement of the indicators and situation of insurance industry:

Calculating this index is impossible due to the lack of announcing the official figure of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2015 by the Central Bank of the Islamic Republic of Iran (CBI).

The sum of square root market share of insurance premium in each of the insurance companies is described as follows:

Herfindahl – Hirschman Index (HHI)

Perfect Competitive Market $HHI < 100$

Sub- Competitive or Decentralized Market

$100 \leq HHI < 1000$

Monopolized or Centralized Market

$1000 \leq HHI < 1800$

Extreme Monopolized or Centralized Market

$10000 > HHI \geq 18000$

Completely Monopolized Market $HHI = 100000$

Number of active compensation assessors stood at 162 units before termination of the year 1394 (March 20, 2015 – March 19, 2016).

■ **Other Salient Achievements of CII are as follows:**

- Approval of new third-party insurance law in 2015 in the Islamic Consultative Assembly (Iranian Parliament also called Majlis),

- Strengthening supervisory tools and approaches of the Central Insurance of Iran and controlling solvency and financial affordability seriously, preventing identification of imaginary gains and interests, forcing the companies to observe technical criteria, rules and

regulations in issuance of insurance policies, monitoring and supervising the method of administration of insurance institutions seriously as well as monitoring performance of insurance marketing and sales networks,

- Offering insurance coverage for important domestic industries, following up necessary measures to approve law of establishing Public Natural Disasters Insurance Fund,

- Launching system to monitor and guide insurance electronically (SANHAB, Persian Acronym) in order to guide, supervise and monitor insurance industry of country,

- Granting license to approx. 100 new insurance coverage plans, 83 percent of which is related to the "Life" and "Medical Treatment and Healthcare",

- Compiling and correcting more than 25 new insurance regulations and also 28 supervisory bylaws approved at Higher Council of Insurance for formulating, guiding and supervising on insurance market of the country, etc.

■ **Important Programs and Measures Taken by CII for Thwarting Sanctions:**

The below measures were carried by the Central Insurance of Iran (CII) for defusing sanctions imposed on Iran:

- Creating reinsurance account special of sanctions and operating this account in national level for presenting insurance coverage to all Iranian insurance institutes,

- Setting up reinsurance consortia and P&I clubs for Iranian and foreign vessels,

- Offering suitable reinsurance coverage in all insurance disciplines which was impossible to transfer risk to outside the country due to sanctions imposed against Iran,

- Preventing millions of dollar from exiting the country (avoiding capital flight) as a result of transferring reinsurance operations to overseas,

- Optimal increase of preserving risk inside the country,

- Making effort to transfer some risks to overseas in order to promote and broaden strategic international cooperation,

- Supporting insurance companies technically and financially for presenting suitable insurance services for large risks,

- Increasing the knowledge and technical knowhow of presenting some insurance coverage such as (P&I) which has been monopolized by certain foreign companies.

■ **Highlights of Activities of Insurance Industry in Post- Sanctions Era:**

- Ranking domestic insurance companies for increasing competition, clarifying and increasing quality of insurance services as well as diversifying insurance services,

- Granting the license for offering insurance services in overseas according to the request of domestic insurance companies and institutions,

- Increasing and promoting professional training level of activists of insurance industry,

- Granting license to both real and legal entities applicant of starting activity in insurance industry,

- Compiling and formulating new insurance initiatives in order to support national productions,

- Managing currency consumptions and resources through supporting domestic insurance institutions, etc.

Situation of Important Indicators of Insurance Industry

| Title | Unit | Amount | | |
|---|----------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| | | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| *Insurance Penetration Rate | Percent | 1.7 | 1.9 | ----- |
| Per Capita Insurance Premium | Million rials | | 2.6 | 1871 |
| Herfindahl Index | Unit | 2157 | 1962 | 1871 |
| **Private sector share from insurance premium of market | Percent | 56.5 | 59.3 | 60.5 |
| Life sector share | Percent | 9.1 | 10.5 | 11.9 |
| share of productive sector | 1,000 billion rials | 162 | 205.7 | 226.1 |
| No. of insurance policies issued | Million insurance policies | 42.8 | 45.8 | 50.7 |
| Compensation paid | 1,000 billion rials | 104.9 | 124.6 | 144.3 |
| No. of Damages | Million Cases | 17.7 | 19.4 | 24.8 |

| Title | Unit | Amount | | |
|--|-------|--------|-------|-------|
| | | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
| No. active insurance representatives | ----- | 37068 | 38926 | 38017 |
| No. of active insurance brokers | ----- | 501 | 591 | 658 |
| ***No. of insurance compensation assessors (licenses issued) | ----- | 200 | 212 | 265 |



FEATURE

Mother Teresa: a saint with a private struggle

By Jay Parini

So Mother Teresa will become an official "saint" on Sunday. The prospect of her canonization means very little to those outside the church, many of whom deride her. Indeed, she was the subject of a famous diatribe by Christopher Hitchens, who described her as "a fanatic, a fundamentalist and a fraud."

In my view, she deserves sainthood for a number of reasons, and even those not wholly committed to the angelic orders should revere her example of commitment to helping the poorest of the poor.



Let's understand what it means, in Roman Catholic terms, to become a saint. There are over 10,000 saints in the church, and these figures acquire sainthood through a process that has been in use since the 10th century.

The Vatican investigates

Before that, people became saints by popular acclaim -- a process that was obviously not rigorous. There is now a step-by-step that starts with the death of somebody who was regarded by many as "holy." The local bishop investigates the life of the person for signs of THIS holiness. After this, a panel in the Vatican investigates the potential saint, and -- if successful -- the person becomes "venerable."

Then comes "beatification," which involves at least one miracle. A miracle suggests that the person lives in heaven now, and therefore can intercede with God on someone's behalf. The idea isn't that the church makes someone "blessed," hence beatified; the idea is that God has already done this, and the church is acknowledging the fact of it. At least another miracle is required for actual sainthood.

There is an elaborate process involved in making saints, and the church listens to those who have opposing views, such as Hitchens on Mother Teresa. The late writer didn't like her because she took money and awards from lots of creeps -- including the horrible Duvalier family of Haiti.

He wondered where all the money went, as the hospice she ran in Calcutta was "as run down when she died as it always had been—she preferred California clinics when she got sick herself—and her order always refused to publish any audit. But we have her own claim that she opened 500 convents in more than 100 countries, all bearing the name of her own order. Excuse me, but this is modesty and humility?"

She devoted herself for over half a century to those on the ragged edge of society: orphans, the poor and dying, the sick.

So she was self-serving at times, not so good at running her organization, and less than perfect as a human being. Let's just say all of that is true.

I would argue that she still deserves sainthood.

True saint

My reasons for loving Mother Teresa, and regarding her as a true saint, have to do with the work she did, as well as her example as a Christian who persevered despite her long-standing personal despair. She devoted herself for over half a century to those on the ragged edge of society: orphans, the poor and dying, the sick. She did so despite 50 years of spiritual aridity, a "dark night of the soul" that seemed endless, as revealed in her posthumous letters.

She felt utterly bereft, cut off from God and his grace for reasons she could not quite comprehend. To one confidante, she wrote: "Jesus has a very special love for you, [but] as for me, the silence and the emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see--listen and do not hear--the tongue moves [in prayer] but does not speak ... I want you to pray for me--that I let Him have [a] free hand."

One priest who knew her recently recalled that as a young woman, she had enjoyed a close relationship with Jesus, who actually spoke to her, telling her to found an order of nuns who would be "so united to me as to radiate my love on souls."

The Missionaries of Charity

She did found this great order, the Missionaries of Charity, a movement that has spread through the world and is dedicated to the poorest people in any given society. Their number has grown from a dozen workers in 1950 to over 5,000 at present. Their mission will be found in 139 countries. It would be difficult even to count the number of human beings helped in some way by this organization.

In spite of her private misery, she persevered, believing in the work of identifying with the mission of Jesus, who had a special love of the poor -- those on the margins of society, those without fame or wealth or power, those truly discarded by the rest of the world. She believed she could, indeed must, take on the cross herself and find her way to union with God through these labors.

I don't think you have to be a Christian (as I am) or a Roman Catholic (as I am not) to appreciate the depth of her example.

Mother Teresa is already a saint in my heart. I don't especially care whether she has official recognition or not, although I'm glad to think she has it, and that those who wish to follow her example, which is the example of Christ, may find a way to grace through her.

(Source: CNN)

By Norman J. Ornstein

I met Tom Korologos in 1970. I was doing interviews for my dissertation on congressional staffs; he was the top staffer for Wallace Bennett, a veteran Republican senator from Utah. Tom not only granted me an interview but also gave me a ton of time and valuable insights. He knew and loved the Senate, knew and loved politics. He has had a remarkable career in Washington, serving several Republican presidents and also working as a top official with the provisional authority in Baghdad and as ambassador to Belgium. If you asked me to name veteran pols who understand how our government and politics work and should work, he would be high on the list.

That makes my disappointment with him even more painful. Korologos, along with former Ronald Reagan national security adviser Richard V. Allen, wrote an op-ed for The Post last week with advice for their fellow Republicans, headlined "Memo to GOP: Forget 2016. Start thinking 2018 and 2020." The op-ed conceded the presidential contest to Hillary Clinton -- and proceeded to give advice on how to combat the incoming president and regain the party's mojo.

What I would expect from someone of Korologos's character -- and that of Allen -- is a list of ways to recapture for the GOP its identity as a conservative, problem-solving party: how to find common ground that solves pressing national problems and does not violate fundamental principles; how to compromise in ways that will move the country away from its precarious position -- in a political system now caught in the cross hairs of tribal partisan warfare, stuck in obstructionist limbo, and facing growing racial and ethnic tension.

Obstructionist approaches

What we got was something else. The core of their advice to Republican lawmakers was to double down on the obstructionist approaches that have defined the Obama years, and to do the same with the kind of "gotcha" investigations that delegitimize a president and Washington politics, while using delay tactics and filibusters to block Clinton Supreme Court nominees.

We know that Republican congress-

Memo to GOP: Forget your obstructionist policies. They backfired.



sional leaders, on the night of President Obama's inauguration in January 2009, chose a deliberate policy of uniting in opposition to all of his initiatives, even before he served a full day in office. Now we have a pair of blue-ribbon establishment Republicans fundamentally suggesting the same approach -- one that has contributed to the decline of the Republican brand, the rise of Donald Trump, the weakening of GOP leadership and the growth of know-nothing radical anti-government sentiment --

Now we have a pair of blue-ribbon establishment Republicans fundamentally suggesting the same approach -- one that has contributed to the decline of the Republican brand, the rise of Donald Trump, the weakening of GOP leadership.

The presidential contest

But the strategy backfired in the presidential contest in 2012 and has helped create the disaster the party faces this year. And the price the country, and the party, will pay will be fearsome. The challenges facing the United States are real and broad. Our infrastructure is crumbling, and the cost of replacing aging water and sewer systems once they collapse will be sharply greater than acting now. The same is true of the lock and dam system, mass transit, bridges and other transportation systems. The electrical grid needs both modernization and hardening to combat cyber terrorism that could shut the country down. Finding ways to enable people who do their part, working hard to support their families, to have roofs over their heads, food on the table and a safety net against an illness, accident or other disaster is a key to our social contract.

The Affordable Care Act needs the technical corrections that every other major social policy received after its passage, and some adjustments, including conservative and market-driven ones, to make it work better. We need to address prison reform, immigration, policy toward serious mental illness, the broader issues of our tax system. If there is no Trans-Pacific Partnership and no broader European trade deal, we need a serious, bipartisan effort to craft a new trade regimen that does not jeopardize the U.S. and global economies. We need to think hard about how we confront terrorism, including funding for homeland security and a much stronger counter-cyber terrorism program.

That is a partial checklist of issues that need action by Congress in conjunction with the president and in the way -- via debate, deliberation and compromise -- the framers envisioned our system working. Focusing on short-term tactical gains instead of building a problem-solving party and attending to the pressing needs of the nation should be the purview of ideologues and partisan hacks, not veteran Washington actors. If that mind-set prevails, even if it reaps rewards in 2018, the nation will suffer -- and ironically, it will likely leave the Trump and Ted Cruz forces positioned to lead the party in 2020.

(Source: The Washington post)

Israel's distortion of history and international law

By Ramona Wadi

In Israel's narrative, every entity and individual who doesn't toe the colonial line is considered to be contributing towards "pushing peace further away". This claim has now been made against the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Nickolay Mladenov, after he criticized Israel's ongoing expansion of its illegal colony-settlements. He made his comments during a recent UN Security Council briefing.

Ma'an news agency has published excerpts of Mladenov's comments and the subsequent statement issued by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's spokesperson. The latter complained that Mladenov was "distorting history and international law."

Mladenov's criticism

Even though the framework of Mladenov's criticism departed from the two-state compromise, which has been extremely beneficial to Israel due to the obvious and growing impossibility of it ever coming into being (and it also buys Israel time to continue its slow extermination of Palestinians by its geophysical expansion), Israel has still deemed the occasion to be worthy of another round of twisted rhetoric.

According to Ma'an, Mladenov told the Security Council: "Let me be clear. No legal acrobatics can change the fact that all outposts, whether 'legalized' under Israeli law or not, whether located on state land, or absentee land, or private land, just like all settlements in Area C and East Jerusalem, remain illegal under international law."

In fact, although in comparison to other official



Any acceptance of settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories is an acceptance of colonization

condemnations Mladenov's words are slightly more assertive, they are still shackled by the same institutions that have created the space necessary for a calculated debate in which Israeli violations are disguised as a "stalemate" in the pointless peace talks. Israel's clear distortion and manipulation of Mladenov's words is obvious in the statement from

Netanyahu's office: "The Palestinian demand that a future Palestinian state be ethnically cleansed of Jews is outrageous and the UN must condemn it instead of adopting it."

There is nothing that indicates a Palestinian demand for ethnic cleansing in either history or diplomacy. Indeed, the incessant concessions made by the Palestinian leadership demonstrate the exact opposite. Nevertheless, it is hypocritical of both Israel and the UN to expect that a Palestinian state should be peopled by Israeli settlers. Any acceptance of settlers in the occupied Palestinian territories is an acceptance of colonization; the UN and the Palestinian Authority may have no qualms about that, but ordinary Palestinians resist the notion -- as is their right enshrined in international law -- even if it is something that the international community is averse to accepting and implementing.

As Israeli government approval for more settlement construction continues to be made public, the international community has once again fallen into the trap of viewing the occupation of Palestine as dating from 1967 and not 1948, when the ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Palestinians began. This allows Israel further space to manoeuvre and distort the definition of "settler" to create additional levels of impunity. This perpetual distortion of the facts provides Israel with the necessary international backing to continue with its plans, fully aware that future diplomatic antics will construct another hypothesis which allows not only for colonial expansion, but also its equivalent in fabricated narrative and memory.

(Source: middleeastmonitor.com)

How the Pentagon became the world's weapon system superstore

By Jason Fields

The United States sells weapons around the world. It sells them to governments it approves of, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands and others.

But it also sells to countries that - to put it in the best light - it has mixed feelings about: Saudi Arabia to name just a few. Israel presents its own unique challenges, being both a close military ally and a democracy, but with policies that drive Washington mad.

The decision on what countries get access to which weapons from U.S. manufacturers is made largely by the Pentagon, arms expert William Hartung explains, in close consultation



with the industry. The consultation is so close, in fact, that the Pentagon often acts as a broker, helping to put

deals together.

Congress rarely gets involved. The current discussion among lawmakers over

whether to sell new weapons to Saudi Arabia after alleged human rights abuses in Yemen is extremely unusual and experts believe the sale will still go through.

Arms sales are about keeping foreign governments sweet and keeping other nations' manufacturers out. And once a country decides to go with U.S. weapons, they'll need ammunition, spare parts and repair services, forging a relationship that lasts for years.

But how does the United States make sure that the weapons it sells don't get resold, or fall into the hands U.S. enemies? And what role does the black market play? Listen to this week's episode of War College to get the answers.

(Source: Reuters)

Drilling 20 new wells in South Azadegan oilfield to go on tender

ECONOMY TEHRAN — Drilling of 20 more deep wells in Iran's South Azadegan oilfield will go on tender soon, Mahmoud Marashi, the operator of the project for development of the oilfield, was quoted by Shana as saying on Friday.

South Azadegan is one of the five oilfields, dubbed the West Karoun oilfields, Iran shares with Iraq at the western part of Iran's southwestern region of Karoun.

According to Shana, in the project for development of South Azadegan, so far drilling of 60 wells has been on the agenda and earlier National Iranian Drilling Company (NIDC) has won the tender for drilling 20 of these oil wells.

"8 companies submitted their offers in the previous tender and based on the financial and technical assessments, NIDC was chosen for the job," Marashi said.

NIDC will complete the drilling of the mentioned wells in a two-year period and six drilling rigs will operate in the project.

The official noted that all the candidate companies for the previous event except for NIDC will be invited for the new tender.

According to Shana, for the time being NIDC is in charge of completing 40 wells in South Azadegan field and it is expected that these wells be ready by mid-November.

After dismissing China's CNPC from South Azadegan development project, Iranian companies



claimed responsibility for the job. Currently, 19 drilling rigs are active in the field and about 270,000 meters of drilling has been done by Iranian companies so far.

Iraq and KRG agree to split Kirkuk revenues 50/50

Iraq and the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan have restarted joint exports of crude from the Kirkuk oil field, after the two parties reached a preliminary revenue-sharing deal earlier this week, industry contacts told Reuters on Thursday.

The agreement came to fruition during recent meetings in Baghdad between high-level officials from Baghdad and Erbil, including Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and KRG Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani.

One shipping source said that revenues from Kirkuk's oil trade would be split 50/50 between Iraq's State Organization for the Marketing of Oil and Kurdistan under the new deal, though the agreement's final details will be sorted out during upcoming discussions between the Iraqi Oil Ministry and the KRG's Natural Resources Ministry.

A dispute between Baghdad and Erbil on the terms of a previous revenue-sharing agreement left the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) the sole manager of

Kirkuk's oil - roughly 150,000 barrels per day - until March of this year.

The KRG shipped oil from the Kirkuk oilfield, as well as several other sites within its borders, to global markets via Turkey, independent of Baghdad's export contracts.

By April, disagreements surrounding the terms of a new revenue-sharing contract led Iraq to cut off the pipeline flow of Kirkuk crude to the KRG, blocking revenues for the cash-strapped regional government in the throes of the war

against ISIS.

Earlier this week, SOMO blacklisted three tankers from using Iraqi ports because they had been working with the Kurds to export oil to markets in Turkey.

On Wednesday, Baghdad said that if the two sides did not agree on a revenue-sharing deal soon, Iraq would consider trucking oil from Kirkuk to Iran instead of using a pipeline that runs through the KRG to bring crude to international markets.

(Source: oilprice.com)

Russia says may consider Rosneft, Bashneft stakes sale as 'integrated project'

Russia may consider privatization of the country's largest oil firm Rosneft and its small rival Bashneft "as an integrated project", First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov said on Saturday in a televised interview.

"There is a proposal from the advisers to consider the privatization of Rosneft and Bashneft in one take, a bit separated by time but in one united project," Shuvalov he told a Rossiya-24 TV news channel.

Italy's biggest retail bank Intesa Sanpaolo is advising on the sale of Rosneft. Russia's second-largest bank VTB has submitted its proposal on Bashneft's stake sale.

After privatization of a 19.5-percent stake, the government will keep 50 percent plus one share in Rosneft, the world's largest oil firm by reserves among listed companies.

The sale of a 50 percent plus one share in Bashneft was unexpectedly mothballed in August, with the government saying that privatization of Rosneft is a priority.

Shuvalov said there have been several proposals from the advisers on how to sell the stakes, including privatization of Rosneft first and then Bashneft, or the other way around. (Source: Reuters)

PICTURE OF THE DAY SHANA/Reza Rostami



Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh (L) and Deputy Oil Minister for International Affairs and Trading Amirhossein Zamaninia (R) met with Algerian Energy Minister Noureddine Boutferfa (C) in Tehran on Saturday.

Costa Rica powered by renewable energy for over 100 days

Costa Rica has powered its electricity grid for over 100 days entirely by renewable energy.

The Latin American country has been run on renewable energy for 121 days and is now aiming for a year without fossil fuels.

Last year, renewable energy sources accounted for 99 percent of the country's electricity and 285 days were powered completely by renewable sources, Inhabitat reports, citing the Costa Rican Electricity Institute.

The majority of the nation's renewable energy came from hydroelectric power plants and a combination of wind, solar and geothermal energy.

In Europe, renewables account for over half of the Sweden's energy. In 2015, Sweden's prime minister announced his country would work towards becoming "one of the first fossil fuel-free welfare states of the world". (Source: Independent)

Last year, Denmark's wind farms supplied 140 percent of demand, in an achievement hailed as "the key to stop global warming".

Earlier this year, Portugal hit a significant milestone in its bid to become entirely reliant on renewable energy after running for 107 hours without using any fossil fuels.

The nation previously relied heavily on coal and natural gas, but has made a considerable effort to increase its use of solar, wind and hydro power in recent years.

In 2009, an EU directive set a target of 31 percent share for renewable energy sources to be part of Portugal's energy mix by 2020.

Only Sweden, Austria, Latvia and Finland are expected to have a higher share by 2020 - while the UK, comparatively, has a target of 15 percent.

(Source: Independent)

Russia pushing ahead with Turkey gas link as ties improve

Russia is on track to accomplish a major energy project aimed at cementing its ties with Turkey following a recent thaw in relations.

The government in Moscow expects officials in Ankara to make necessary decisions in one to two months to proceed with a natural gas pipeline under the Black Sea that may kick off by end-2019, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Saturday. A draft intergovernmental agreement has been sent to Turkey, he told reporters in the Russian Far Eastern city of Vladivostok.

The Kremlin-backed Gazprom PJSC previously said that Russia was assessing several potential routes via the Black Sea through different countries. "I believe the decision has been made," Novak said, leaving possible alternatives to Turkish Stream off the table. (Source: Bloomberg)

For years, Russia has been striving to cut its reliance on gas transit through Ukraine, which accounts for about 40 percent of its exports to Europe, by building pipelines under the Baltic and the Black seas. An initially planned link to Bulgaria, known as the South Stream, was strongly opposed by the European Union.

The Turkey gas link, originally designed to make the country a new gas transit hub for the EU and replace Ukraine from 2020, has also been delayed amid gas-supply pricing disputes. Its annual capacity, initially planned at 63 billion cubic meters (2.2 trillion cubic feet) with four lines was later halved.

Gazprom had said it was going to build two links to Turkey before the project was shelved, one serving the Turkish consumers and the other one planned for Southern Europe. (Source: Bloomberg)

PERSPECTIVE

Why renewable energy is now a requirement for CSR

By Megan Wild

One of the most relevant and effectively conveyed forms of corporate social responsibility is renewable energy. With countries all around the world committing to renewable energy goals in the Paris Agreement, companies can also take the lead.

Here are four reasons that renewable energy is a "must" for your company's commitment to social responsibility.

Long-term employee productivity is threatened

As the Paris Agreement showed, many of the world's biggest countries are implementing costly-but-necessary plans in an effort to make renewable energy 100 percent by 2050. The big reason for this is that the effects of global warming are very real. In a business sense, global warming is set to cost the economy over a trillion dollars by 2030, with real concerns over increasing heat contributing to a lack of production.

According to Dr. Tord Kjellstrom, heat has a big impact on the workplace. "If you are physically active in work, the hotter it is, the slower you work. Your body adapts to the heat and in doing that it protects you from the heat," he explains. "For individual countries, even within a short time span, the losses due to the increasing heat can be in the many billions."

Clearly, global warming has the potential to influence employee effectiveness for the worse, which is something the business world should strive to avoid.

Renewables are becoming cheaper and more efficient

Renewable energy certainly isn't a fad. There's now three times more wind power and 15 times more solar power in the world than in 2007.

Previously, a big barrier, especially for small businesses, to renewable energy efforts was the price.

However, over the past few years, the gap is closing. Solar and wind energy have declined substantially in cost; with on-shore wind electricity falling 18 percent since 2009 and turbine costs falling 30 percent since 2008. This makes wind power the cheapest source of new electricity. For solar energy, the price has fallen by 80 percent since 2008, making a once-unobtainable energy source a very real consideration for homes and businesses alike.

As technology improves, renewable energy is also becoming more efficient. In years past, traditional solar panels would only work in areas with a high amount of clear and sunny days. The development of thin-film solar panels has improved efficiency during cloudy conditions, which increases the geographic areas that can use solar power.

As a result of dropping prices and increased efficiency, businesses can now pursue renewable energy without sacrificing a hefty sum. A business that publicly declares their renewable energy usage provides a positive perception among current and prospective clients. It showcases a business that cares about the world we live in.

In an age where the public perceives corporations as acting me-first, sustainability provides a breath of fresh air. It makes a business look better than their competition not using or promoting renewables.

Increased employment opportunities

A recent Greenpeace estimate found that, if the world switched 70 percent of electricity programs to renewable energy, the resulting savings would be \$180 billion each year. Research like this shows little reason to fear economically for renewable energy implementation. Actually, improved renewable energy initiatives have boosted employment, with 380,000 new jobs created in Germany — where one-quarter of their national energy demands are being met by renewables.

While businesses do not have the resources of an entire country, it's realistic for a business to cut costs using renewable energy. In some companies, this cost-saving measure could help them either raise salaries of hire more employees, thus growing their company. Saving on costs is something coveted by any business; and if renewable energy can play a role in that cost-cutting, it's an added benefit.

The impact is visible

Some corporate social responsibility plans do great work in improving the environment, which is very commendable. However, they often miss out on the publicity benefits that could come regardless. Some actions are less visible than others, though adapting and promoting renewable energy can be very visible. Especially when a business has solar technology outside of their offices.

Bottom line: Renewable energy is good for business

A business that adapts to renewable energy should do so visibly, as it has a positive public stigma. Visible solar energy initiatives, for instance, are a great way to shift public perception toward the positive.

The four reasons listed here emphasize why renewable energy should be part of your company's commitment to social responsibility. In addition to possible cost savings, it also has the potential for a very positive PR impact; along with a morale boost among employees and customers alike.

Renewable energy looks pretty good for business. (Source: triplepundit.com)

Russia: oil production freeze to be discussed at meeting in Algiers

Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said on Saturday that an oil production freeze will be one of the issues discussed by crude producers at their meeting later this month in Algiers.

Separately, Novak told journalists on the sidelines of a business forum in Russia's Far East city of Vladivostok that Russia has completed its work on a road map for the TurkStream gas pipeline project.

He said that gas should start flowing to Turkish consumers by the end of 2019 via first line of TurkStream. (Source: Reuters)

Poor democracies that aren't poor in demanding honesty

In ousting a president who symbolized a corrupt elite, Brazil joins many other developing nations whose citizens have demanded honesty in elected government. Brazil can take lessons from anti-graft successes in India, Indonesia, and Nigeria.

When Brazil's Senate voted to remove president Dilma Rousseff from office last month, the country joined a new club of developing-nation democracies forced to respond to rising public demands for clean government.

In places such as Nigeria, India, and South Africa, corruption has become the top issue and has led to new graft-busting leaders. For scandal-packed Brazil, ousting Ms. Rousseff was seen as a cleansing moment, or the "beginning of a new era," as the main prosecutor in the impeachment trial said.

Indeed, changing leaders, whether by election, mass protests, or impeachment, is only an initial step in a democracy's journey toward honest and transparent governance. In Brazil, a string of protests since 2013 was mainly fueled by a giant scandal involving the state oil firm Petrobras, which the ruling parties used as a piggy bank. Yet just as important, a new crop of prosecutors and judges dedicated to equality before the law were willing to stand up to traditional political pressure.

Even after the impeachment, Brazil needs deep-seated reforms to end a culture of corruption. Most of all it must change a political system that relies on cash to win votes in the legislature. And its now-chastened leaders in Brasília, starting with a new president, Michel Temer, must ensure the independence of prosecutors and the judiciary.

Brazilians can take comfort that they are not alone among poor democracies in learning how to curb bribery, kickbacks, and illegal bank accounts.



In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has put bureaucrats and politicians on notice by making government tenders and bidding more transparent. And a new tax system is expected to reduce demands for bribes by local officials. His election in 2014 was driven in part by a mass anticorruption movement.

In South Africa, voter frustration over corruption within the ruling African National Congress led to major election losses for the party in key

Brazilians can take comfort that they are not alone among poor democracies in learning how to curb bribery, kickbacks, and illegal bank accounts.

cities last month. In the nation's largest city, Johannesburg, the new mayor from the Democratic Alliance, Herman Mashaba, declared corruption to be "public enemy No.1."

Anti-corruption bodies

In Ukraine, new anti-corruption bodies are finally bringing cases to court in hopes of breaking a culture of impunity, two years after protests forced a president, Viktor Yanukovich, from office. A critical step was Western funding and support of the National Anti-Corruption Bureau. In Guatemala, too, outside support for an anti-corruption probe helped fell a president in 2015.

In Indonesia, the 2014 election of Joko Widodo as president ushered in a new campaign against corruption, led mainly by an independent agency known by its initials KPK. While the agency has conducted prosecutions of top-level officials, it also promotes a program to help families teach integrity and honesty to children.

In Nigeria, a new president, Muhammadu Buhari, has brought zero tolerance of corruption and launched a "war against indiscipline" in government. He is relying heavily on a rejuvenated graft-fighting body, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission. But he is also trying to overhaul the oil sector to end a long history of bribery.

Taken together, the efforts in these democracies represent a sea change in public thinking. With new digital tools, citizens are more aware of corruption and can more easily organize to choose leaders that reflect their desire for honest government. Getting there is not always quick and straightforward. But corrupt leaders are getting the message. Brazil is only the latest example.

(Source: The CSM)

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Study finds strong link between Zika and Guillain-Barre syndrome

A comparison of rates of Guillain-Barre syndrome before and after Zika arrived in seven countries has found a strong association between the virus and the illness, researchers from the Pan American Health Organization said on Wednesday.

The current Zika outbreak was first detected in Brazil last year and has since spread across the Americas and the Caribbean.

Pregnant women are considered to be at greatest risk because the virus can cause severe birth defects, including microcephaly, which is marked by small head size and underdeveloped brains. In Brazil, Zika has been linked to more than 1,800 cases of microcephaly.

The first alarms over Zika in Brazil, however, occurred months before microcephaly cases emerged, as adults recovering from Zika infections appeared to have higher-than-normal rates of Guillain-Barre, an autoimmune disorder in which the body attacks itself in the aftermath of an infection, typically occurring in the days following an illness.

In a report published as a letter to the editor of the New England Journal of Medicine, Dr. Marcos Espinal, director of the department of communicable disease at PAHO - the regional arm of the World Health Organization - and colleagues an-

alyzed rates of Guillain-Barre syndrome and Zika in Bahia, Brazil, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Suriname and Venezuela.

Cases of Zika

They evaluated a total of 164,237 confirmed and suspected cases of Zika virus disease and 1,474 cases of Guillain-Barre that occurred between April 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016, using data collected through official country reports.

Their analysis found a close association between increases in Zika cases and increases in Guillain-Barre. As Zika infections waned in a country, incidence of Guillain-Barre waned as well, the team found.

Compared with pre-Zika rates, Guillain-Barre increased 172 percent in the state of Bahia, Brazil, which was hard hit by the Zika outbreak. They saw similar increases in other countries, with Guillain-Barre cases rising 211 percent in Colombia, 150 percent in the Dominican Republic, 100 percent in El Salvador, 144 percent in Honduras, 400 percent in Suri-



name and 877 percent in Venezuela.

The team found no link between Guillain-Barre and dengue, a closely related virus that had been suspected as a contributor to the increase in cases.

Based on their findings, the researchers said Zika and Guillain-Barre "are strongly associated," however, they said

more study is needed to prove direct causation.

Guillain-Barre causes gradual weakness in the legs, arms and upper body, and in some cases, temporary paralysis. Patients often require intensive care and a respirator to support breathing.

Given these demands, the researchers said Zika imposes a "substantial burden" on populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, where some 500 million people are at risk.

(Source: Huffington Post)

Based on their findings, the researchers said Zika and Guillain-Barre "are strongly associated," however, they said more study is needed to prove direct causation.

New dengue vaccine could instead cause more cases, experts warn

This may go against what typically comes to mind when you think about vaccines, but the newly licensed vaccine against the dengue virus -- trade name Dengvaxia -- could lead to an increase in the number of cases of the disease if not implemented correctly, experts warn in a new study.

The number of people affected by dengue has increased in recent years, with 390 million people estimated to be infected each year, and cases of the disease have become more global -- with cases reported in more than 100 countries worldwide.

Dengvaxia was produced by Sanofi Pasteur, which, after spending 20 years developing the vaccine, published promising findings on its effectiveness in 2015. Trials

showed the vaccine to be 59.2% effective against dengue when results were pooled across populations and age groups, though this varied when looking at the type of dengue, the age of those receiving the vaccine and whether people had been previously infected.

"Its effectiveness depends on the local epidemiology of dengue and how intense the transmission is," said Neil Ferguson, director of the MRC Center for Outbreak Analysis and Modeling at Imperial College London. "If you vaccinate people at high risk and in the right age group, you can get significant benefits."

The vaccine is now licensed for use in six countries; in April, the Philippines became the first to roll it out. Brazil

recently announced plans to implement the vaccine, and Paraguay, Singapore, El Salvador and Mexico are due to follow suit, as they all have high burdens of the disease.

Clinical trials

But in the new study, published Thursday, Ferguson used data from the clinical trials to assess the impact of using the vaccine in different settings and found that its use in areas with low levels of disease, where people are unlikely to have been previously exposed to dengue, could lead to an increase in people severely affected by the infection due to the complexities of the virus and the way it interacts with our immune system.

(Source: The CNN)

NEWS

'Skin cancer most prevalent in Iran, men more prone than women'



TT MEDICINE TEHRAN - Compared to other cancer desk types, Iranians suffer from skin cancer most, according to a radiation oncologist on Thursday, where men are more prone to the deadly disease.

Skin cancer is categorized into melanoma and non-melanoma with the latter type being less aggressive, yet more common, IRNA quoted Afsaneh Maddah as saying.

If diagnosed early, the patients with non-melanoma have higher chance of survival.

Melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer, develops in the cells (melanocytes) that produce melanin, the pigment that gives your skin its color. Melanoma can also form in your eyes and, rarely, in internal organs, such as your intestines.

The specialist explained that most non-melanoma skin cancer can be prevented by protecting the skin from the sun and ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Maddah recommended people limit their exposure to direct sun rays, adding that those who have to be in the sun for long periods of time should use caution and sport hats, gloves, and glasses and apply sunscreen cream.

It is important also to check the skin frequently by taking notes of all the spots and moles on body, she suggested, and see a dermatologist upon noticing any changes in their color, appearance and size.

According to Maddah, non-melanoma skin cancer is the most common type of all cancers among Iranian men and second most prevalent for Iranian women.



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Blindsiding game of Erdogan; Op Euphrates Shield

By Parnaz Talebi

Ankara's recent invasion in Syria, though claimed to be anti-terrorist, is exactly setting the ground for reinforcing the tragedy ongoing in the Arab country.

In a surprise move late AugU.S.t, Turkey launched a military operation dubbed "Euphrates Shield", the aim of which was claimed to be liberation of northern Syrian city of JarablU.S. from ISIL. Preventing new flows of migration and delivering aid to civilians were also announced by Turkish officials as aims of the operation, which was lunched under air support of U.S.-led coalition, albeit despite the will of Syrian government

of last month's attempted coup," he said in his joint press conference with Prime Minister Yildirim, adding in another part of his remarks, "but we are also awed by the bravery of the Turkish people, who literally stood in front of tanks, some actually ran over by those tanks, to defend your democracy."

"I understand the intense feeling your government and the people of Turkey have about [Gulen]. We are cooperating... with Turkish authorities, our legal experts are working right now with their Turkish counterparts on the production of and evaluation of the material and evidence," Biden said noting that legal procedure mU.S.t be followed by both sides.

Yet, Ankara seemed closer to its goals when Yildirim



Hitting U.S. -backed Kurdish forces in Syria was considered a response to Washington's refusal to extradite Fethullah Gulen, whom Erdogan blames for the failed coup of July 15.



who called it "blatant violation of sovereignty".

Yet the act seemed reasonable as on AugU.S.t 22, after a suicide bombing attack in a wedding party in the Gaziantep left over 54 people dead, Turkish military launched strikes against ISIL shelling targets near JarablU.S. and north of Manbij announcing that the strikes are aimed at opening a corridor for an operation. "Daesh should be completely cleansed from our borders and we are ready to do what it takes for that," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut CavU.S.oglu said during a news conference after the Gaziantep attack.

Turkey's President Erdogan also stated that the aim of the "Operation Euphrates Shield" is to eliminate threats from ISIL and Kurds later on AugU.S.t 24; "we started a military operation in northern Syria at 4 a.m. this morning, aimed at eliminating the threats posed by Daesh and Syrian Kurds," He said, adding that Turkey is trying to put an end to attacks on Turkey from neighboring Syrian regions.

Not surprisingly, the very first warning came from a Kurdish body, The Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), demanding the immediate withdrawal of Turkish forces; "Turkey is trying to turn its indirect occupation of Syria into a direct one, we demand that Turkey immediately withdraws from territory of Syria, stops supporting terrorist groups in Syria, otherwise we will force them out of our territory," said a PYD representative, Sputnik reported.

Ankara, then, put it clearly; "PYD, YPG and among them these democratic forces have to go beyond Euphrates to the eastern part... [otherwise] we are going to do what we need to do, and we will not allow them to realize their secret agendas," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut CavU.S.oglu warned on Wednesday.

Hitting Kurdish forces in Syria, who are backed by U.S. unconditionally, was considered by some analysts as a response to U.S.' refU.S.al to extradite Fethullah Gulen, whom Erdogan blames for the failed coup of July 15. Discontent by U.S.' response to the coup and receiving negative pulses from its other NATO allies in European Union, Turkey made a return first to RU.S.sia and then to Iran, who supported the country massively after the coup. The most notable shift, however, maybe was the shift in Turkey's position over President Assad. Erdogan, previoU.S.ly, had repeatedly refU.S.ed to negotiate with Syrian president. Yet, it was after his visit with RU.S.sian President Vladimir Putin early AugU.S.t that in a statement Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said "there may be talks [with Assad] for the transition."

In line with all these concerns, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden arrived in Ankara only hours after "Operation Euphrates Shield" was launched. Although much was not revealed of Biden's meetings in Ankara, it was clear that Ankara's U-turn in foreign policy was the major concern for U.S., while Turkey's was the reason behind the lack of support from Western allies after the coup.

Biden also tired to restore the lost trU.S.t of Turkish government and nation after the coup; "We express in no uncertain terms the continuing, unwavering support of the United States for Turkey in the wake

and Biden announced that they reached an agreement that forces of the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) mU.S.t not move to the west of Euphrates river if they don't want to lose U.S. support. Ankara, further, asked Washington to review its stance on the two Kurdish organizations recognizing them as terrorist groups.

On the other hand, both RU.S.sia and Iran expressed concern on Turkey's operation in Syria. "Moscow is deeply concerned about what is happening in the Syrian-Turkish border area," RU.S.sian Foreign Ministry said, adding that further degradation in the conflict zone and the prospect of Kurdish-Arab ethnic conflict raises alarm, according to Sputnik.

"We are convinced that the Syrian crisis can be

Analysts argue that the significant U-turn by Erdogan was a sign of his flexibility and pragmatism after he noticed how his strategies in the region are boomeranging on his nation and government.

resolved only on the solid basis of international law, through broad intra-Syrian dialogue with the participation of all ethnic and religioU.S. groups, including Kurds, and on the basis of the June 30, 2012, Geneva Communique, Resolution 2254 and other UN Security Council resolutions adopted on the initiative of the International Syria Support Group," the ministry stressed.

Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Bahram Ghasemi, also voiced concern on Turkey's military operation; "Turkish presence on Syrian soil will lead to further complication of the situation in the region," said Ghasemi. "Adopting approaches that defy the political authority of a country's central government is not acceptable," he continued.

Turkey's military operation, at first glance, may seem promising with regards to fight against terrorism and the trilateral cooperation of Ankara-Moscow-Tehran, yet that would be simplistic to ignore the existing facts in Turkey's foreign policy and its unconditional support for terrorism in the region. Turkish government, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has been seeking oU.S.ter of President Bashar Assad since the onset of crisis in Syria and had not spared any effort to reach the aim including backing different terrorist groups like ISIL and al-NU.S.ra Front (renamed Jabhat Fateh al-Sham). Ankara, meanwhile, has long been an important NATO ally for Washington in the region, notably for providing airbase for U.S. airstrikes in the Middle East, among them the strategic Incirlik airbase. Further, Turkey has been in a frU.S.ating clash with Kurds in the region, considering them a threat to its territorial integrity.

Some analysts, positively, argue that the significant U-turn by Erdogan was a sign of his flexibility and pragmatism after he noticed how his strategies in the

region are boomeranging on his nation and government. They argue that Turkey was suffering from insecurity and its citizens have been regularly victimized by terrorists, whose flow to region in general, and Syria in particular, was authorized by Turkish government through borders. In addition, economic, energy and particularly political and military issues made restrictions preventing Ankara from full breakup of ties with Moscow and Tehran. Erdogan knows that further cooperation with Iran and RU.S.sia means more guarantee and compensation from EU and U.S., analysts say. On the other hand, and in a broader outlook, the trilateral cooperation of Turkey-RU.S.sia-Iran could strengthen the role of all three countries in the region, weakening the influence of EU and U.S., would put pressure on their allies like Saudi Arabia and lead to a review of strategies by West.

Still, the more realistic point of view, the recent developments are not in favor of countering terrorism in Syria or supporting its government. The Turkish invasion to Syrian territory, air covered by U.S. warplanes, could be considered gaining control on a Syrian town and installing proxy forces, experts say. Ankara has already announced that it wants to establish a "safe zone" along the Syrian side of the border stretching 100 kilometers and 30 kilometers deep. No-fly zone, under any interpretation, is equal to war and is considered an obvioU.S. military assault against sovereignty.

This would be the second safe zone as Pentagon issued a warning last week that Syrian and RU.S.sian aircrafts approaching Hasakah in eastern Syria would be shoot down by U.S. warplanes. Establishing buffer zones in Syria is not a new idea and it was agreed upon in July 2015. The safe haven was designed to span from the Turkish borderline into Syria. It would have extended from Azaz in the West to JarablU.S. in the East and as far south as al-Bab. With a width of about 68 miles, the zone was planned to extend around 40 miles deep into Syria, right on the doorstep of Aleppo, the strategic town for both fighting parties in Syria. The zone then would facilitate weaponing and supplying of the terrorists and would provide them a safe corridor to the heart of Syria.

Turkey, the invisible hand of NATO in the Middle East, has no intention of fighting terrorism clearly. In fact, Ankara killed two birds with one stone, or better say, many birds with one stone under the pretext of recent operation. Ankara cleared its borders from Kurdish forces and gained the control of border town of JarablU.S. under the U.S. support with a false flag operation and created a buffer zone, which it was struggling for since 2012. In a broader map, however, this means more NATO and U.S. influence in Syria and region and failure of political solutions for the Syrian crisis, and therefore paving the way for the ultimate goal; regime change.

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Future airplanes will fly on twistable wings

Shape-changing wings could help futuristic blended-wing aircraft adapt their lift-to-drag ratio as conditions change during flight. In the meantime, flexible control surfaces will be tested on modern commercial planes in the next three years.

More than a century ago, the first aviation pioneers figured out a way to use rigid wings with flaps to generate enough force to lift a heavy craft into the sky. It was one of the great advances in human history and also the beginning of a new era in transportation. Airplanes, and the airline industry that depends on them, are now among the world's largest businesses, with air travel producing over U.S. \$700 billion in annual revenues.

However, commercial airlines spend more than 25 percent (pdf) of their operating expenses on fuel, earning the industry a reputation for razor-thin margins that will eke out just \$39 billion (pdf) in profits this year. Meanwhile, modern aircraft wings and engines have reached near-peak levels of efficiency, making it exceedingly difficult for engineers to generate additional savings.

Twistable aircraft wings

And yet, there is one promising strategy that remains—changing the shape of the aircraft wing during flight. For three



decades, engineers at aerospace companies, universities, and defense labs have been working on twistable aircraft wings that could be instantaneously and minutely adjusted to improve fuel efficiency. With these wings, aircraft designers could get closer to optimal performance by increasing an airplane's lift-to-drag ratio, which is a measure of aerodynamic efficiency, in response to variations in speed, altitude, air temperature, and other flight

conditions.

This modern pursuit has a notable historical precedent. Way back in 1905, Orville Wright steered the brothers' pioneering airplane by lying prone in a saddle and twisting the tips of the plane's fabric-and-wood wings with a sway of his hips. Soon after, as aircraft became heavier, engineers switched to stiff wings controlled by rigid flaps and ailerons, and morphing these surfaces

From 1996 to 2005, the U.S. Air Force collaborated with NASA to develop an Active Aeroelastic Wing, which used the power of the airstream to twist itself for better roll control during high-speed maneuvers.

proved impractical.

Decades later, in the mid-1980s, the U.S. Air Force tested Mission Adaptive Wings that were built by Boeing and installed on an F-111 aircraft. An automated control system reshaped the thin outer covering of these wings to change their curvature, thereby reducing drag by up to 20 percent, for supersonic flight. Unfortunately, the added weight and power demands of this technology made the aircraft less efficient overall. From 1996 to 2005, the U.S. Air Force collaborated with NASA to develop an Active Aeroelastic Wing, which used the power of the airstream to twist itself for better roll control during high-speed maneuvers. But that technology was intended only for fighter jets, and the program eventually lost support.

The flexible wing concept has matured greatly since then. My colleagues and I have built a shape-changing control surface that in recent tests, conducted with the technology installed in place of traditional flaps on the wings of a Gulfstream III jet, reduced drag to a degree that could improve airplanes' fuel efficiency by up to 12 percent.

(Source: IEEE Spectrum)

NASA's delayed Mars lander will launch in 2018

The Interior Exploration using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport, or InSight, was originally scheduled to launch in March 2016, but NASA delayed the launch indefinitely due to a serious structural problem with one of the probe's two science instruments.

Now, scientists with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory have been tasked with fixing the problem before the 2018 launch date. The instrument redesign and delayed launch date will add \$153.8 million to the initial \$675 million budget, NASA officials said in a statement.

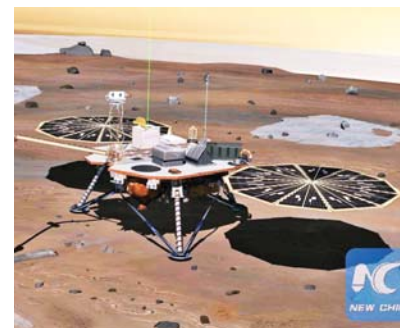
The probe must be launched during a particular window, when the Earth and Mars are positioned in such a way that the probe can easily reach the Red Planet. That window will open on March 5, 2018, according to the statement. The probe is now scheduled to land on Mars on Nov. 26, 2018.

The InSight mission's central aim is to understand how Mars and other rocky planets formed. The probe will land on the Red Planet surface and stay there for a full Mars year (687 Earth days). Two instruments on board InSight will study the planet's internal geologic activity, as well as the internal temperature of Mars.

Planet's history

By studying the planet's interior, scientists will gather clues about the planet's history, including how it formed, the statement said. Zooming out, this information can be fed into an understanding of how the other rocky planets in the solar system formed and how rocky planets might form around other stars.

The delay in launch was caused by a problem with one of the probe's instruments, the Seismic Experiment for Interior Structure (SEIS), which will measure very small seismic activity



on Mars. The instrument "requires a perfect vacuum seal around its three main sensors in order to withstand harsh conditions on the Red Planet," according to the statement, but inspections done ahead of the initial launch date found leaks in the vacuum chamber.

The SEIS instrument was initially provided by the French Space Agency (CNES), with the participation of the Institut de Physique du Globe de Paris (IPGP), the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research (MPS), Imperial College and the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), according to NASA's website.

Under the new plan, JPL scientists will be responsible for "redesigning, developing and qualifying" the portions of the instrument that failed. CNES will "focus on developing and delivering the key sensors for SEIS, integration of the sensors into the container, and the final integration of the instrument onto the spacecraft."

"We've concluded that a replanned InSight mission for launch in 2018 is the best approach to fulfill these long-sought, high-priority science objectives," Jim Green, director of NASA's Planetary Science Division, said in the statement.

(Source: space.com)

Scientists look at how AI will change our lives by 2030

By the year 2030, artificial intelligence (AI) will have changed the way we travel to work and to parties, how we take care of our health and how our kids are educated.

That's the consensus from a panel of academic and technology experts taking part in Stanford University's One Hundred Year Study on Artificial Intelligence.

Focused on trying to foresee the advances coming to AI, as well as the ethical challenges they'll bring, the panel released its first study.

The 28,000-word report, "Artificial Intelligence and Life in 2030," looks at eight categories -- from employment to healthcare, security, entertainment, education, service robots, transportation and poor communities -- and tries to predict how smart technologies will affect urban life.

"We believe specialized AI applications will become both increasingly common and more useful by 2030, improving our economy and quality of life," Peter Stone, a computer scientist at the University of Texas at Austin and chair of the 17-member panel of international experts, said in a written statement. "But this technology will also create profound challenges, affecting jobs and incomes and other issues that we should begin addressing now to ensure that the benefits of AI are broadly shared."

Late in 2014, Stanford researchers launched their One Hundred Year Study on Artificial Intelligence, or AI100.

Thinking ahead

The university invited AI researchers, roboticists and other scientists to predict the effects of advancing machines that perceive, learn and reason on the way people live, work and communicate. Researchers are hoping that, by thinking ahead, they can anticipate the changes -- the benefits and the problems -- AI might bring, so scientists and law makers



can be better prepared to handle them.

AI has taken it on the chin in recent years, with industry figures like physicist Stephen Hawking and high-tech entrepreneur Elon Musk decrying the societal dangers of the technology.

Unlike Musk, who equated developing AI with summoning a demon, the AI report issued this week shows that scientists anticipate some problems but also numerous benefits with advancing the technology.

"AI technologies can be reliable and broadly beneficial," said Barbara Grosz, a Harvard computer scientist and chair of the AI100 committee. "Being transparent about their design and deployment challenges will build trust and avert unjustified fear and suspicion."

In the study, researchers said that when it comes to AI and transportation, autonomous vehicles and even aerial delivery drones could change both travel and life patterns in cities. The study also notes that home service robots won't just clean but will offer security, while smart sensors will monitor people's blood sugar and organ functions, robotic tutors will augment human instruction and AI will lead to new ways to deliver media in more interactive ways.

And while the report also notes that AI could improve services like food distribution in poor neighborhoods and analyze crime patterns, it's not all positive.

(Source: Computerworld)

Global study shows link between fertilizer and plant diversity

It's well-established that the more species that thrive in a habitat, the better it is at weathering a variety of events from floods to drought to fire. Now, an international study with strong ties to the University of Minnesota is shedding new light on the effect of an increasingly common human-caused disturbance -- the addition of nutrients such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium -- on a wide range of grassland ecosystems around the world.

Building on research published by internationally renowned U of M ecologist David Tilman more than three decades ago, a new study led by Stan Harpole, a professor at the Helmholtz Center for Environmental Research in Leipzig, Germany and a former student of Tilman, published in the journal *Nature*, shows that adding multiple nutrients decreases plant diversity in complex ways that go beyond simply crowding out the competition's sunshine.

In the early 1980s, Tilman developed what has since become fundamental theory of biodiversity based on experiments at Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve. Tilman found that limitations in the amounts of the various things plants need, such as nutrients, water or sunlight, are what allow species to co-exist, since each one can specialize in getting by with something in short supply.

(Source: EurekAlert)

Official Focuses on Conservation of Energy Consumption Optimally

ECONOMY All roads will lead to the optimal energy consumption management.

Announcing the above in an interview with our correspondent, Managing Director of Gilan Regional Power Company said: "A training and tutorial seminar on "Strategies of Managing Energy Consumption in Buildings" was held at Amphitheater of Bank Saderat Iran Branch in Rasht, Gilan Province in the presence of a number of city and provincial officials of the Company."

It should be noted that this prestigious Seminar was held in Gilan Province in cooperation with Gilan Regional Power Company (PJS), Gilan Province Building Engineering Council Organization and Iranian Electronic and Power Engineers Association.

Turning to the export of electricity, he said: "Gilan



Province lacks any challenge in terms of generation of electricity."

Moreover generating electricity for consumption in the city and province, Gilan Regional Power Company exports its generated electricity to the neighboring provinces including Mazandaran, Zanjan, Tehran and Azerbaijan, he maintained.

In the end, the senior official of the company said: "Gilan Regional Power Company has forged a two-circuit electricity connection line with the Republic of Azerbaijan and uses it if required."

The provincial company will take giant stride in the current Iranian calendar year in 1395 (to end March 19, 2017) in order to materialize most of its objectives.

NEWS

Transparent solar panels are 50 times more productive than regular photovoltaics

If you're looking to install new solar panels in your home, why not consider those created by the aptly-named SolarWindow Technologies, which transform regular windows into solar panels that are up to 50 times more efficient than the regular photovoltaics you'd attach to a roof?

"Just pick up your cell phone, look at the face without any power or image, and you'll see a pretty good example of what today's thin film looks like," John Conklin, CEO of SolarWindow, told Digital Trends. "It's heavy, it's too dark to see through, and most thin-film is not flexible. This type of technology isn't the type to build skyscraper windows."

This is where SolarWindow comes into play. As the term "regular windows" suggests, users don't have to replace the existing windows in their home, but need only treat them with a special process developed by the company.

"We apply liquid coatings to glass and plastic surfaces at ambient pressure, and dry these coatings at low temperature to produce transparent films," Conklin continued. "We repeat these processes, and then collectively these coatings -- and thus the glass and plastic surfaces -- generate electricity."

Of these coatings, the most important is the so-called "Active Layer," through which electricity is generated by the absorption of light, and the transparent conductors, which allow the electricity to be extracted. "(The) coatings are primarily organic, primarily from carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, and oxygen," Conklin said. "We are constantly refining each of the layers to improve on the power we're able to extract from these coatings and enhance their manufacturability."

(Source: Digital Trends)

Scary cave spider? No, they're new beetle species

New research reveals two new species of these spindle-legged cave beetles while also upending the creatures' family tree. The study, based on molecular analysis of the cave beetle DNA, created a new genus, *Graciliella*, which contains at least four species of the beetle.

The study was led by Iva Njunji, a cave biologist at the University of Novi Sad in Serbia. Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia and nearby Balkan nations sit atop multiple cave systems, which are home to a variety of bizarre cave-adapted organisms. One example is the European cave salamander, or olm, a blind and colorless creature that navigates its environment through smell, touch and the detection of magnetic fields.

Cave beetles evolved from above-ground ancestors that looked like average, plump-bodied, short-legged beetles. The cave-adapted animal, though, has no eyes, no wings and no color. Its legs and antennae are extremely long, because the beetles compensate for the lack of eyesight with touch. These long appendages, combined with a fat hind part of the body that may help store fat during times of famine, give cave beetles their spidery appearance.

Because most animals that live their entire lives in caves develop similar characteristics -- pale bodies, no eyes -- it can be hard to discern subtle differences between species, the researchers said. So, Njunji and her colleagues turned to molecular analysis to detect genetic differences between cave beetles collected in Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. Their results revealed that species assigned to the genus *Anthroperon* actually descended from more than one common ancestor. Thus, the researchers spun off a new genus, *Graciliella*, containing species found in Montenegro and Croatia.

The genus gets its name from the graceful appearance of the long-legged beetles. Four species belong in the genus so far, including two new ones: *Graciliella kosovaci* and *Graciliella ozimeci*. Each looks quite similar to the naked eye, but the researchers found subtle anatomical differences, such as in the genitals.

(Source: Live Science)

Tractor for modern farm features everything but the farmer

As Detroit car makers and Silicon Valley tech giants vie to bring driverless cars to U.S. roads, one of the world's largest tractor makers is looking to do the same down on the farm.

Case IH, the agricultural-machinery unit of CNH Industrial NV, this week unveiled a sleek, aggressive-looking red-and-black machine at the annual Farm Progress Show in Boone, Iowa.

This tractor -- CNH calls it the Autonomous Concept Vehicle -- has one obvious difference compared with more conventional models: there's no cab for a driver. Instead, it comes equipped with cameras, radar and GPS, allowing a farmer to remotely monitor planting and harvesting via an app on a tablet computer, the company's Brand President Andreas Klauer said in an interview Wednesday as crowds gathered around the machine to snap photographs.

Agricultural-machinery companies like Case, Deere & Co. and Agco Corp. are keen to add the latest technology amid growing interest in the use of big data analysis, drones and satellite imaging. But this brave new world isn't without its challenges. The U.S. Justice Department said Wednesday it's suing Deere to stop the company buying a business that it argues would eliminate competition in high-speed planting, a young and developing segment of farming.

(Source: Bloomberg)

NEWS

Mohammed tops the list of most popular baby boy names in England and Wales

Mohammed is the most popular name for boys in England and Wales, but it doesn't top the official list because there are so many different ways to spell it.

There were 7,361 children born last year called Mohammed, Muhammad, Mohammad or Mohamed, according to the Office for National Statistics, which would have made it the number one boys name if the variations were taken into account.



There are officially 14 different ways to spell Mohammed - which means 'one who is praiseworthy' - and the variation in spelling can depend on a family's background, whether they are from an Arabic-speaking country and differences in pronunciation.

The most popular variation on the list is 'Muhammad' which placed 12th with 3,730 boys born with the name, followed by Mohammed at 29, Mohammad in 68th place and Muhammed coming in at 121.

This marks the first time Muhammad has been top in two areas, having overtaken Oliver as top name in the West Midlands from 2014.

Royal names also remain popular, with George, Harry and William all in the top 10 boys' names, although Charlotte has dropped two places to 25th in the girls' list despite the nation's love for the baby princess.

(Source: Daily mail)

LEARN ENGLISH

Ending Excessive Spending

Raphael: Sorry to be a **buzzkill**, but this **gravy train** we've been on is about to end.

Kelly: What do you mean?

Raphael: There have been a lot of complaints about our department's spending on **extraneous** things, and to **quell the masses**, the department **head** is making some major changes.

Kelly: Like what?

Raphael: Like no more **frivolous** and **excessive** spending on travel and entertainment at conferences.

Kelly: But those are the only things that make this job **bearable**. Those **perks** are **part and parcel** of working for a government agency - at least that's what I used to think.

Raphael: Well, once the press **got wind of** some of our **spending practices**, they started to question our **budget allocations**. **The long and short of it** is that those days are about to end.

Kelly: And I was planning to take you and a few other employees to St. Lucia for a **retreat** in the spring.

Raphael: I think you'd better change those plans, at least the **venue**. You'd have better luck getting it approved if you picked Cleveland!

(Source: eslpod.com)

Words & phrases

buzzkill: something or someone that spoils an otherwise enjoyable event

gravy train: an organization, activity, or business from which many people can make money or profit without much effort

extraneous: not belonging to or directly related to a particular subject or problem; irrelevant

quell the mess: to cause a situation in which there are a lot of problems and difficulties, especially as a result of mistakes or carelessness to end

head: a leader or person in charge of a group or organization

frivolous: not serious or sensible, especially in a way that is not suitable for a particular occasion

excessive: much more than is reasonable or necessary

bearable: something that is bearable is difficult or unpleasant, but you can deal with it

perk: something that you get legally from your work in addition to your wages, such as goods, meals, or a car

be part and parcel of something: to be a necessary feature of something

get wind of: to hear or find out about something secret or private

spending practice: the way someone or an organization spends money

budget allocation: the amount of funding designated to each expenditure line

the long and short of it: used when you are telling someone the most important facts about something rather than all the details

retreat: a quiet or secluded place in which one can rest and relax

venue: the place where something happens, especially an organized event such as a concert, conference, or sports competition



Be kind to me!

Iran's Traffic Police penalize 4,000 reckless intercity bus drivers

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Iran's Traffic Police have disciplined 4,000 reckless intercity bus drivers for violating traffic rules or positive drug test, said Traffic Police Chief Mohammad-Hossein Hamidi.

The offending bus drivers who were caught over the past two months (June 21 to August 22) were banned from driving either permanently or temporarily, Hamidi noted, IRNA news agency reported.

He further explained that the number of the buses have quadrupled increasing to 16,000 over the past 10 years and fortunately the number of the accidents almost halved to 120 since 2007 up to now.

Commenting on the fatalities caused by buses Hamidi stated that the death rate had decreased by 60 percent from 2006 to 2015 dropping from 543 to 217.

Undercover police officers boarding intercity buses

There will be undercover traffic police officers boarding on the intercity buses to control the drivers' traffic behavior, the Traffic Police chief Taqi Mehri said.

Mehri also added that the passengers can also text the number plates to the number 1101120 so that the police can easily crack down on the



offending drivers.

To control the roads some 5,000 forces are across the roads as the number of the road trips are growing by the end of summer, he added.

Earlier this month, Mehri explained that by installing monitoring devices on the roads the buses will be controlled online from a one-kilometer distance

so that the police can have access to all their information via GPS including their speed which help them in better regulating the bus drivers' driving behavior under a scheme called "Sepah-Tan". Mehri also highlighted that there are so far 300 speed control cameras on the roads which will grow to almost double by the end of the summer (September 21).

180 dead, 2,000 injured over ten days

Over the first third of the Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August 22-31) some 180 lost their lives and 2,000 sustained injuries in road accidents, he said.

The number of the deaths and the injured decreased by 2 percent and 5 percent respectively compared to the same period last year, Mehri noted.

Some 55 deaths a day on average

Over a report released by the forensics some 55 people died a day since the beginning of the Iranian calendar month of Shahrivar (August 22).

The past 10 years figures and numbers also indicate that some 22,000 people died over the month of Shahrivar in Iran.

Although there has always been a decrease in the number of the deaths from year to year for the past 10 years in the month of Shahrivar, reducing from 3,240 in 2006 to 1,718 in 2015, the deaths occurred in this month always accounts for a significant numbers.

The number of the deaths in the month of Shahrivar also exceeds that of Noruz holidays (Iranian New Year holidays falling on March 20 to April 1) as 968 died in 2015 Noruz holidays and 1,718 in the month of Shahrivar.

China's legislature ratifies Paris agreement on climate ahead of G-20 meeting

China's legislature ratified a landmark global agreement on climate change, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Ratification of the so-called Paris Agreement by the rubber-stamp Chinese legislature Saturday morning was largely a formality, since President Xi Jinping approved the deal. It set the stage for Mr. Xi and U.S. President Barack Obama to announce the formal adoption of the agreement on the eve of a summit by the Group of 20 major economies in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou.

China and the U.S., the world's two largest economies, are also the biggest carbon emitters. Their endorsement of the Paris deal, climate experts said, should provide strong encouragement for other big emitters to follow in ratifying the agreement and bringing it into force.

Similarly, the Obama administration has said it would put the agreement into effect without Senate approval. The administration says the climate accord isn't technically a treaty, but rather an executive action, so doesn't require a vote.

Approval by China and the U.S. means the Paris

climate agreement could enter effect as soon as this year, much earlier than the initial target date of 2020. For the agreement to enter force, it must receive ratification from at least 55 countries, accounting for at least 55% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Together, China and the U.S. account for about 38% of emissions, said Greenpeace's Mr. Li. Aside from the U.S. and China, 23 countries have approved the agreement, representing about 1% of global emissions, according to the Washington-based World Resources Institute.

(Source: Wall Street Journal)



Flood, lightning in Iran leave 7 dead

SOCIETY TEHRAN — Flood and lightning in five provinces of Mazandaran, Golestan, Semnan, Ardebil, and East Azarbaijan claimed seven lives, Rescue and Relief Organization Chief Nasser Charkhsaz has said.

Out of the seven victims, four died of drowning in flood and three got hit by lightning, Charkhsaz said, Mehr news agency reported on Saturday.

Owing to the changes in weather in the past few days, the aforesaid provinces have been struck by flood since Friday, he added.

Charkhsaz further explained that 21 cities have been hit by flood and some 6,341 victims in 138 villages and towns received relief services by 76 teams comprising 294 relief forces.

"We have set up 5 tents and accommodated 20 flood-stricken victims," he said, adding, "We've also pumped water out of 56 houses and helped save four sinking cars from drowning."



ENGLISH IN USE

LEARN NEWS TRANSLATION



First series of Persian Leopard insurance claims paid

The first series of Persian Leopard insurance claims were paid by Ma Insurance Co. over a ceremony held in Bushehr province on Wednesday, the website of Iran Environment and Wildlife Watch reported.

The Department of Environment, the National Environment Fund, and the Ma Insurance Co. first signed a memorandum of understanding on March 16, 2016, aiming to coordinate measures to save the endangered Persian Leopard. The insurance aims at compensating for the losses inflicted upon human beings, livestock, and the leopards themselves.

اولین سری از خسارات تحت پوشش بیمه نامه جامع پلنگ ایرانی پرداخت شد

به گزارش پایگاه خبری دیده بان محیط زیست و حیات وحش ایران، اولین سری خسارات تحت پوشش بیمه نامه جامع پلنگ ایرانی توسط شرکت بیمه ماطی مراسمی در استان بوشهر روز چهارشنبه پرداخت شد.

در ۲۶ اسفندماه ۱۳۹۴ برای اولین بار و بر اساس تفاهم نامه ای مابین سازمان حفاظت محیط زیست، شرکت بیمه ماطی و صندوق ملی محیط زیست به منظور اجرایی شدن بیمه پلنگ ایرانی که یکی از اقدامات طراحی شده در جهت حفاظت و مدیریت پلنگ در ایران است، صادر شد.

ENGLISH PROVERB

Make a silk purse out of a sow's ear

■ **Explanation:** make a good quality product using bad quality materials
■ **For example:** To make chairs that'll last, you need good strong pieces of wood. You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

PHRASAL VERB

Barge in

■ **Meaning:** to enter somewhere rudely, or to rudely interrupt someone
■ **For example:** George barged into my office without knocking.

ENGLISH IDIOM

All skin and bone

■ **Explanation:** If someone is all skin and bone, they are very thin or too thin
■ **For example:** After trekking in the Himalayas, he was all skin and bone.

Islam Karimov, president of Uzbekistan for the past quarter of a century, was buried in his home city of Samarkand on Saturday, leaving behind a power vacuum in a nation that serves as a bulwark against militant Islam in Central Asia.

Karimov, 78, died from a stroke. After a funeral rite in Samarkand's ancient Registan square attended by hundreds of men - some of whom were in tears - his body was buried at the city's Shahi-Zinda cemetery, two attendees told Reuters.

Karimov was derided by Western governments as a dictator who violated human rights, but for many people in Uzbekistan, a mainly Muslim ex-Soviet state which borders Afghanistan, he is the only head of state they have ever known.

With no obvious successor, Karimov's death has triggered an outpouring of grief, mixed with uncertainty about the future.

"I still can't believe it happened," said a 39-year-old resident of the capital, Tashkent, who was among thousands who lined the main thoroughfare early on Saturday to watch the funeral cortege pass by en route to Samarkand.

"I don't know what happens now, I am lost," said the man, who declined to be identified.

How the power vacuum is filled in Uzbekistan is of urgent concern to Russia, the United States and China, all powers with interests in the volatile Central Asia region, where Uzbekistan is the most populous state.

Central Asia analysts say a small circle of senior officials and Karimov family members will have been meeting behind closed doors to try to agree on anointing a new president.

The funeral rites offered clues to who might be in the running. At the Samarkand ceremony, Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev, 59, and Finance Minister Rustam Azimov, 57, were allocated spots in the front row, nearest to Karimov's coffin.

If the elite fail to agree among themselves on a transition, the resulting instability could be exploited by extremist militants who in the past have staged violent attacks in Uzbek cities and want to make Uzbekistan part of an caliphate.

Karimov jailed, killed or exiled most of

Uzbekistan buries President Islam Karimov



the extremist fighters inside Uzbekistan. Many have since joined the Taliban in Afghanistan and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, where they have become battle-hardened.

An upsurge in violence in Uzbekistan would pose a threat to the United States, which is trying to contain the insurgency in Afghanistan, to Russia - home to millions of Uzbek migrant workers - and to China, which worries about Central Asian extremists making common cause with separatists from its mainly Muslim Uighur ethnic minority.

■ Weeping daughter

Many people had anticipated that Karimov would be succeeded by his older daughter Gulnara, a businesswoman and pop star, but she fell from favor two years ago and there was no sign of her on Saturday among the family members in the funeral cortege.

At Tashkent airport, as the coffin was

being loaded onto a plane bound for Samarkand, Karimov's wife, Tatiana, and his younger daughter, Lola Karimova-Tillyaeva, stood at the foot of the aircraft steps. His daughter, dressed all in black, was dabbing her eyes with a white handkerchief.

Karimov's death could unleash a new round of jockeying between Russia, the United States and China, which are all trying to bring Central Asia, with its oil and gas reserves and metal ore, into their sphere of influence.

In a statement offering his condolences, United States President Barack Obama said his country stood with Uzbekistan as it "begins a new chapter in its history".

Alexei Pushkov, the pro-Kremlin head of the foreign affairs committee in Russia's parliament, responded on Twitter that Obama was "mistaken if he thinks the new chapter is going to be written in Washington".

Libya pro-gov't forces say attacking last ISIL bastion in Sirte

Forces loyal to Libya's Government of National Accord (GNA) said on Saturday that they have launched a new attack on diehards of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group in the coastal city of Sirte.

Backed by weeks of United States air strikes, the pro-GNA forces have recaptured nearly all of what had been the extremists' main stronghold in North Africa.

"We are attacking the last ISIL positions in district three," a GNA fighter told AFP. The GNA forces media center confirmed on Facebook that the attack had begun.

"Our forces are advancing inside the areas where Daesh (ISIL) is, in district three, and so far have taken control of" two banks and a hotel, the media center said.

It also said they had thwarted an attempted suicide bombing.

One pro-government fighter had been killed, the Misrata hospital's Facebook page said.

An AFP journalist saw ambulances leaving Sirte -- hometown of dead dictator Moamer Gaddafi -- for Misrata to the west.

The forces loyal to the United Nations-backed GNA had said last weekend they were preparing to "liberate"



the entire city after seizing several ISIL positions, including its headquarters.

On Wednesday, GNA head Fayez al-Sarraj visited Sirte for the first time since loyalist forces launched their offensive more than three months ago to drive the extremists from the city.

Sarraj and some of his ministers toured former front lines as well as the Ouagadougou conference center which ISIL had used as its base.

"We will continue to chase, with the help of God, the

Daesh (ISIL) remnants and strike them wherever they may be in our country," Sarraj said this week.

The capture of the city by ISIL last year sparked fears that the extremists would use it as a springboard for attacks on Europe.

The ISIL terrorists took advantage of the chaos in oil-rich Libya after the 2011 uprising to seize Sirte in June 2015, hoisting their black flag above the city.

The offensive on the ground has been backed by U.S. air power.

On Friday, the United States Africa Command said that since the U.S. campaign began on Aug. 1, U.S. drones, helicopters and bombers had carried out a total of 108 air strikes against the terrorists in Sirte.

It said that on Aug. 31, targets including five "enemy fighting positions" and a vehicle bomb were hit.

Fewer than 200 ISIL terrorists remain in Sirte, Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis said on Thursday, and they are essentially surrounded by GNA forces and the sea.

The fall of Sirte, 450 kilometers (280 miles) east of the capital Tripoli, would represent a significant setback to ISIL, which has also faced a series of setbacks in Syria and Iraq. (Source: AFP)

More Turkish tanks enter Syria in new front: state media

Turkey on Saturday sent more tanks into the northern Syrian village of al-Rai claiming to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group, opening a new front after its intervention last month against the group, state media reported.

The tanks crossed into the village from the Turkish border town of Kilis to provide military support to Syrian opposition fighters after ridding northern villages of

extremists in its "Euphrates Shield" operation launched on Aug. 24, state-run Anadolu news agency said.

At least 20 tanks, five armored personnel carriers, trucks and other armored vehicles crossed the border, Dogan news agency said.

Turkish Firtina howitzers fired on the ISIL targets as the fresh armored contingent advanced, Dogan said.

Ahmed Othman, a commander in

pro-Turkey rebel group Sultan Murad, told AFP in Beirut that the group was now "working now on two fronts in al-Rai, south and east, in order to advance towards the villages recently liberated from ISIL (ISIL) west of Jarabulus".

Last month's operation was Ankara's most ambitious during the five-and-a-half-year Syria conflict and has continued since with tanks, war planes and Special Forces providing support to rebels.

The most prominent foreign dignitaries at the funeral were Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Tajikistan's President Imomali Rakhmon and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

■ Cost of stability

Karimov was the head of the local Communist party in Uzbekistan when it was still a Soviet republic, and he remained at the helm after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

While other newly-independent Soviet republics were convulsed by wars, economic upheaval and political turmoil, life for people in Uzbekistan stayed largely stable, safe and predictable -- a state of affairs that Karimov's supporters touted as his great achievement.

"The people of Uzbekistan associate the huge achievements of the country since independence with President Karimov's name," a state television anchor, in a black suit and tie, said on Saturday in an elegy that was preceded by somber music.

But the stability came at a cost.

Elections were held but were not democratic, according to international observers. To ensure Uzbekistan could earn foreign currency from exporting cotton, people -- including children -- were press-ganged into going into the fields to help with the harvest, witnesses have told Reuters.

Citing an extremist threat, Karimov cracked down ruthlessly on anyone deemed to be a religious extremist. Growing a beard or renouncing alcohol was sometimes enough to earn arrest. Rights groups say detainees were tortured.

In the Uzbek city of Andizhan in May 2005, security forces killed around 500 mostly unarmed people who had been protesting against local officials, witnesses and rights groups said. Karimov put the death toll at 169 and said his forces had put down an armed uprising.

Karimov's own family were not immune from the harsh treatment. In a letter smuggled to a BBC journalist in 2014, Gulnara, the older daughter, alleged she was being held under house arrest by her father's security officials after her family ostracized her.

(Source: Reuters)

NEWS

Philippines: Abu Sayyaf blamed for attack in Davao City

The Philippine government has blamed the armed Abu Sayyaf group for a blast that killed at least 13 people in the home city of President Rodrigo Duterte, prompting him to declare a "state of lawlessness".

Duterte told reporters in Davao City on Saturday that he "may invite uniformed personnel to run the country according to my specifications".



He said police and the military will be authorized to conduct searches "in a bid to stop terrorism".

"This is not the first time that Davao has been sacrificed to the altar of violence," the president said, adding: "It's always connected with Abu Sayyaf before. They gave a warning. We know that."

"We were ready for this," Duterte said when asked if the attack constituted a failure of intelligence.

Interior Minister Mike Sueno, earlier told local radio station DZRH that his office had information about an imminent Abu Sayyaf attack.

"Yes, we expected this already. Two or three days ago, we already have an intelligence (report) on this," Sueno said.

Another radio station also reported that Abu Sayyaf spokesman Abu Rami has confirmed that attack.

■ 'Civil liberties still stand'

Richard Heydarian, a Professor of Political Science at Manila's De La Salle University, told Al Jazeera that a "state of lawlessness" is not the same as martial law, whereby certain civil liberties are suspended.

"What it means is that there is going to be more police presence; more checkpoints; the military could be involved and have more coordination with the police and if necessary impose a curfew. But basic civil liberties will still stand."

"One thing we're still not certain about is whether it is going to be nationwide state of lawlessness, or only for Davao, because we've been getting mixed signals from different offices of the president."

The blast took place on Friday night at a night market in Davao, 960km south of the capital, Manila.

The explosion occurred close to the high-end Marco Polo hotel that is popular with tourists and business people, city spokeswoman Catherine de la Rey told AFP news agency.

Regional Police Chief Manuel Guerlan told Reuters news agency that a ring of checkpoints had been thrown around the city's exit points.

■ War on drugs

The Philippine president was in Davao, but was safe and at a police station after the explosion, his son Paolo Duterte, who is vice mayor of the city, told Reuters news agency.

Duterte is hugely popular in Davao, having served as its mayor for more than 22 years before his stunning national election win in May, garnered from the popularity of a promised war on drugs.

His election has prompted a spike in drug-related killings, with more than 2,000 people killed since he took office on June 30, nearly half of them in police operations.

Davao is located in Mindanao, a large southern island beset by decades of armed rebellion by Muslim groups. The region is also home to Abu Sayyaf, a rebel group loosely linked to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Daesh) terrorist group and notorious for making tens of millions of dollars from kidnappings.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

However, Davao itself is largely peaceful and Duterte has been credited with transforming it from a lawless town to a southern commercial hub for call centers and offshore business processing services.

Abu Sayyaf is a militant group based in and around Jolo and Basilan islands in the southwestern part of the Philippines, where for more than four decades, Moro groups have been engaged in an insurgency for an independent province in the country. The group is considered very violent, and was responsible for the Philippines' worst terrorist attack, the bombing of Superferry 14 in 2004, which killed 116 people. The name of the group is derived from the Arabic abu (father of), and sayyaf (swordsmith). As of 2012, the group was estimated to have between 200 and 400 members, down from 1,250 in 2000.

Since its inception in 1991, the group has carried out bombings, kidnappings, assassinations, and extortion in what they describe as their fight for an independent Islamic province in the Philippines. They have also been involved in criminal activities, including kidnapping, rape, child sexual assault, forced marriage, drive-by shootings, extortion, and drug trafficking, and the goals of the group "appear to have alternated over time between criminal objectives and a more ideological intent".

The group has been designated as a terrorist group by the United Nations. On 23 July 2014, Abu Sayyaf Leader Isnilon Toton Hapilon swore an oath of loyalty to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL. In September 2014, the group began kidnapping people to ransom, in the name of ISIL.

(Source: agencies)

White cop who body-slammed black girl faces no charges

A white United States police officer, whose outrageous actions against a 16-year-old African-American girl captured on cameras last year, will not face criminal charges, a prosecutor says.

South Carolina prosecutor Solicitor Dan Johnson decided on Friday not to criminally charge Officer Ben Fields, who was seen on videos violently handcuffing the girl at Spring Valley High School in Columbia last October.

Fields, the school resource officer was seen slamming the girl and wrapping his forearm around her neck before dragging her from behind her desk and throwing her across the classroom to handcuff her. He called on the girl to surrender her mobile phone but she refused.

The incident made headlines and caused outrage across the nation last year.

In a 12-page court report, the prosecutor, howev-

er, said he found no probable cause to charge Fields. Johnson only expressed concerns over the "manner" in which Fields handled the situation.

The report includes statements from some witnesses, who claimed the incident looked worse in the video than it really was. Another witness was quoted in the report as saying that the officer did not intentionally throw the girl across the room, but lost his grip in trying to remove her from the desk after she refused to leave.

Fields also claimed that the desk flipped over only because the student had locked her leg inside it. He also claimed that she punched him in the chest.

Both the African American student and Niya Kenny, who captured the video, have faced "disturbing schools" charges for nearly a year. Johnson said they would also be dropped.

The American Civil Liberties Union has filed a lawsuit against South Carolina over the criminalization of normal adolescent misbehavior. It argued that state's "disturbing schools" and "disorderly conduct" charges are unconstitutionally vague.

Kenny and several other students have also joined the lawsuit as plaintiffs.

According to a survey release by The GenForward in August, two-thirds of young African-Americans in the U.S. said that they or someone they know has experienced police violence or harassment.

Another report an activist group that runs the Mapping Police Violence project, U.S. Police killed over 1,150 people in 2015, with the largest police departments disproportionately killing at least 321 African-Americans.

(Source: Press TV)

TENNIS

Nadal fist-pumps way into U.S. Open last 16

Fourth seed Rafa Nadal showed he is healthy and ready to challenge for a third U.S. Open title as he rolled into the last 16 at Flushing Meadows on Friday with a fist-pumping 6-1 6-4 6-2 win over Russian Andrey Kuznetsov.

Erasing any lingering concerns over an injured left wrist that kept him out of Wimbledon, Nadal has made a powerful start to the year's final grand slam, racing into the fourth round without dropping a set.

It was vintage Nadal on a warm New York evening, as the energetic Spaniard wore down his 47th-ranked opponent with a breathless work rate and a bombardment of stinging forehands.

"I am improving with that shot," Nadal told reporters. "Everybody knows that is a very important shot for me.

"When I am able to play that shot well, then the court opens a lot." Nadal, who incurred his wrist injury at the French Open and then missed Wimbledon, showed his form when he reached the semi-finals of the singles and won the doubles gold medal at the Rio Olympics last month.

Two weeks later, saying he felt fatigued, Nadal lost his second match at Cincinnati but has certainly appeared re-energised since arriving at Flushing Meadows.

The 14-time grand slam winner concedes he still feels some discomfort in his wrist but it has not affected his performance on the New York hardcourts.

"Still (feel) something but something that is not limiting my game now," said Nadal. "That's the most important thing.

"I don't know in which kind of level I am. "Is true that when I had to stop I was playing great. I felt myself ready for the French." For me is a great news that I am on the tour again and I am playing every day with less pain on the wrist."

Despite the one-sided scoreline, Nadal did his best to keep another large crowd at Arthur Ashe Stadium entertained on Friday closing out the match in theatrical style, setting up the winning point with a between-the-legs lob that had fans on their feet.

The 30-year-old had them roaring again seconds later as he danced across the court in a succession of fist-pumps.

"Every victory helps for the confidence, especially when you feel that you played well," smiled Nadal, who will next meet 24th-seeded Frenchman Lucas Pouille, a five-set winner over Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut.

"I feel that today I played great tennis for a long time, for a lot of moments on the match."

(Source: Reuters)

Tomas Berdych to rejoin tennis circuit soon

Top-ranked Czech tennis player Tomas Berdych announced on Twitter that he would soon be hitting the tennis courts after having been cleared by his doctors.

Previously, the 30-year-old had announced that he would be missing the US Open due to Appendicitis.

Prior to missing this year's US Open, Berdych played in the last 13 editions of the last Grand Slam of the season. His streak thus unfortunately came to an end this year.

"I'm very disappointed to announce that I will not be able to compete at the US Open this year," wrote Berdych on Facebook. "I was just diagnosed with Appendicitis in Cincinnati so I will be flying back to Europe for additional checks and treatment."

The 8th ranked player in the world also added that he knew he would be back as strong as ever and that he was looking forward to playing as soon as possible.

Also, couple of days ago, Berdych had hinted that his recovery was going well and that he was going to be back soon.

It remains to be seen when the 2016 Wimbledon semi-finalist will make his comeback to competitive tennis.

(Source: tennisworldusa)

Murray: I'd said I didn't know if I was ever going to win another Grand Slam

Britain's Andy Murray says he had some doubts about his chances of winning another Major.

The world no. 2, who lost three Major finals since winning Wimbledon in 2013, admitted that it was frustrating and mentally challenging for him to keep going after couple of disappointments. Serbian Novak Djokovic is the "guilty one" as he was the player, who beat the Scot in each of those three finals during the aforementioned period - 2015 and 2016 Australian Open and the 2016 French Open.

However, the 29-year-old won his third Grand Slam title at this year's Wimbledon after defeating Milos Raonic in the final.

Back in 2012, Murray won the London Olympics and then followed it with by winning the US Open. Now, he is fresh off taking the gold at the Rio Olympics and is eyeing to win his second title at Flushing Meadows.

"I'd said I didn't know if I was ever going to win another Slam. I've lost so many tough ones and it was frustrating. It's tough to mentally keep going," said Murray in his US Open column, in association with the New York Times. "Then I won one, and then the Olympics obviously came straight afterwards. Davis Cup was a few months ago. Murray's recent great form saw him winning 22 matches in a row, before Croatian Marin Cilic put an end to that in the final of the Cincinnati Masters. The three-time Major champion confessed that he felt he was in a really good place right now, but insisted that he didn't feel dominant.

(Source: tennisworldusa)

Daum: Romania will qualify for the World Cup again

Christoph Daum is finally a national team coach. He made his mark in the German Bundesliga by creating teams at Cologne and Bayer Leverkusen that almost became league champions, by surprisingly winning the German title with VfB Stuttgart in 1992 and by almost being appointed head of the German national team.

At the beginning of his career in particular he was an innovator, but was also strident and confrontational. Many people even described Daum, who never reached the top of the game as a player, as one of the league's first 'concept coaches' before the term even existed. He found a second home in Turkey, where he won the league and cup with Besiktas and took the title twice with Fenerbahce, while he enjoyed further success at Austria Vienna by winning the double in 2003.

At Leverkusen, Daum once made players walk on shards of glass in order to illustrate their 'mental strength' to them, and one of his former charges summarised his powers of motivation thus: 'If you're only 5'4' and speak with Daum, then you feel like you're 6'1'.' Daum always wanted to be a national team coach - and now he is, having been appointed by Romania in July 2016. He is fully motivated once again.

"It's always been one of my aims to participate at a European Championship or World Cup with a national team because you have to be at your best in a short space of time," the 62-year-old said in an interview with FIFA.com. "As a club coach you have lengthy periods to prepare, but with a national team you have to apply your experience together with the players and staff in a very short time. Having to take such quick decisions is a new challenge for me."

The golden era of the Romanian national side was in the 1990s, when Gheorghe Hagi's star shone brightly in helping them knock out Argentina in the last 16 at the 1994 FIFA World Cup USA™. Their last outing at the tournament came four years later in France, while they were eliminated at the group stage of UEFA EURO 2016.

"The new board of directors at the Romanian Football Association are building new and, above all, better structures in every area of football and I'm happy to be able to contribute to that," said Daum, who considers it an honour to be the first foreign national team coach in the history of Romanian football.

Transition

It did not take Daum long to realise how different the role would be to that of club football: "The level of responsibility of a national team coach is far greater than that of a club coach. At a club you're contributing to working on ideal structures in



a localised part of the country, whereas a national coach's sphere of influence extends across the whole nation. The influence and opportunity to shape matters are very comprehensive and appealing. As national team coach I see it as part of my duty to be an instigator in many areas and a supporter of every club, coach and player in the country."

Initially, however, he is charged with giving greater impetus to a team that disappointed at the European Championship, returning home with just one point from group games against France, Switzerland and Albania. "So far the task has primarily been about gathering information, which means evaluating and scouting a lot of our potential players' matches in person, as well as selecting the best possible staff around the team and making minor adjustments to the infrastructure," said Daum of his first steps in his new job.

"Romanian players have always been associated with attractive football. Constantly attacking, both with and without the ball, was a Romanian virtue. We have to make ourselves aware of that again, and, combined with flexibility and tactical discipline, activate an unwavering winning mentality and the best possible team spirit."

In order to achieve that, Daum will not insist on one specific playing style or rigid philosophy: "My pragmatism means always

making the best decisions for the team to be successful." Throughout his career Daum has repeatedly managed to form teams that have surpassed expectations. "Everywhere in football the objective is always the same: make the individual players and therefore the whole team better," he said. "We all have one objective in our hearts and minds: to qualify for the World Cup. I'm convinced that after 20 years, Romania will take part at a World Cup again."

Experience

Having been a coach for over 30 years now, Daum has gained a wealth of experience - which has in turn changed him. "I could fill a book," he said in answer to a question about how exactly he is different from his former self on the touchline. "In many areas of training I've had to make constant adjustments. The tactical requirements have become ever more expansive, the technical equipment has changed my work as a coach and the amount of public relations work has increased dramatically. Football has gained speed in every department." Not that it bothers him. "Fundamentally, both then and now I view myself as an instigator and, to some extent, a trailblazer. That hasn't changed and nor will it. For me it's a pleasure to embark on new and, above all, better ways of doing things."

In that regard it is helpful that he has

recognised that his role is not only about teaching his players. "I've actually always been able to learn from my players," said the Rhineland native. "Early on, I had many private conversations with Morten Olsen in which he shared his ideas about playing attractive attacking football. I adopted several features in transitional play from him. Pierre Littbarski taught me how to be successful with a little more calmness and authority. Michael Ballack illustrated the importance of flexibility in players and the team as a whole at a time when we were still very much focused on positional play. Roberto Carlos unequivocally demonstrated how important it is to constantly practice set-pieces."

Romania will now face Poland, Denmark, Armenia, Montenegro and Kazakhstan in Russia 2018 qualifying Group E. "I know everything I need to know about each of our opponents," said Daum ahead of his side's opening fixture at home to Montenegro on Sunday. "Every team that plays against us will be highly motivated. We have ten difficult finals ahead of us, in which we'll have to continually push ourselves beyond our current limit in order to leave as victors. Only as a unified team on and off the pitch will we achieve automatic qualification. I'm certain that every Romanian player will give their all in this difficult group to qualify for the World Cup."

(Source: FIFA)

Manchester City's Sergio Aguero banned for three games

Manchester City striker Sergio Aguero will miss the Manchester derby after being given a three-match ban for elbowing West Ham defender Winston Reid.

The Football Association found the Argentine guilty of violent conduct after he clashed with Reid in the 3-1 win at the Etihad on Aug. 28.

City failed in an appeal to get the decision overturned and he will now miss the game against Manchester United on Sept. 10 as well as the home clash with Bournemouth on Sept. 17 and EFL Cup tie at Swansea City four days later.

Aguero caught Reid in the neck with his elbow and the New Zealand international was treated on the pitch before being substituted.

Referee Andre Marriner said he and his fellow officials missed the incident during the match.

Aguero was given an extension until 6 p.m. BST on Thursday to respond to the charge, which was issued after a review panel felt he should have been sent off.

A statement on the FA website said: "Sergio Aguero will serve a three-match suspension with immediate effect after an FA charge of violent conduct against him was found proven.

"The Manchester City forward was involved in a 76th-minute incident with West Ham United's Winston Reid on Sunday [28 August 2016], which was not seen by the match officials but caught on video.

"The club denied the charge and submitted further that, if it was to be found proven, the standard punishment would



be clearly excessive.

"On finding the charge proven at a hearing today, an Independent Regulatory Commission went on to reject the club's further claim to decrease the three-match ban."

Aguero picked up a calf injury in the game and was substituted in the 88th minute. He has since withdrawn from Argentina's World Cup qualifiers against Uruguay and Venezuela.

Losing the striker is a major setback for City and boss Pep Guardiola, particularly with the game against Jose Mourinho's United coming next.

Aguero has made a superb start to the season, scoring six times in his first four appearances, including a hat trick in the Champions League playoff first leg against Steaua Bucharest.

His form has helped Guardiola's side win their three opening Premier League games, with United and Chelsea the only other teams to have a 100 percent record. (Source: ESPN)

PSG failed to replace Zlatan Ibrahimovic this summer - Jerome Rothen

Former Paris Saint-Germain player Jerome Rothen has said that the French champions "needed" to replace previous talisman Zlatan Ibrahimovic this summer but have "missed" their opportunity to do so now the transfer window is shut.

The ex-France international hails from the Parisian suburb of Chatenay-Malabry and played for PSG between 2004-10 -- the longest spell of his career at any one club.

Rothen, 38, feels that although the French capital outfit have "lost" Zlatan Ibrahimovic to Manchester United, it will not necessarily make them weaker in the UEFA Champions League.

"If you compare the strength of the squad from last season to this, you have lost Ibra," Rothen conceded when speaking on RMC radio. "However, there were always question marks over him in the Champions League. We will not complain that he is no longer here."

Former AS Monaco and Rangers man, Rothen, says his former employers should have tried to replace Ibrahimovic with Juventus' Gonzalo Higuain and their failure to do so means they lack a "true No. 9," despite Edinson Cavani's presence at Parc des Princes.

"They tried to replace [Ibrahimovic] him but they failed in bids to sign Neymar and [Cristiano] Ronaldo, they stayed with their clubs, while Higuain went to Juventus. He [Higuain] should perhaps have been the true No. 9 PSG need. For me, they needed to replace Ibra but they missed their chance."

Instead, Qatar Sports Investments (QSI) have decided to put their faith in misfiring Cavani as their star striker this season in a bid



to help him live up to his €64 million fee from back in 2013 -- still a Ligue 1-record spend.

Rothen expects "better" from the Uruguay international without Ibrahimovic but feels improvements have been made in other areas.

"Elsewhere, [Grzegorz] Krychowiak is better than [Benjamin] Stambouli was and [Thomas] Meunier replaces [Gregory] Van der Wiel. [Hatem] Ben Arfa enjoyed a fantastic season in Nice and at this level; he can offer a bit more."

"[Edinson] Cavani should be better without Ibra. They have also replaced [Laurent] Blanc and that is not so bad. The problem is that none of these new recruits started against Monaco."

Recently appointed PSG coach Unai Emery suffered his first competitive defeat in a 3-1 loss away at Monaco last weekend. Calls are growing for him to start introducing some of his summer arrivals into the starting XI ahead of the beginning of Champions League action after the international break.

(Source: Soccerbet)

Kafashian declares Iran's categorical support of the Islamic World's first FIFA World Cup

➔ We want to extend a helping hand, however small or big, to our Muslim brothers and sisters in Qatar. It is a point of pride for all nations in this region.

How can Iran help Qatar?

Mr. Nasser Al-Khater answered that question by stating the biggest help Iran can offer is to qualify for the 2022 tournament. We will do our utmost to meet that request! Off the field, this is a once in a life-time opportunity for all of us in this region to work together to showcase our shared culture and religion in the best light to the whole world.

Can you please elaborate further?

Qatar has been under constant and unfair attacks in recent years. Even when some of the accusations have been proven wrong, like the number of dead workers building World Cup stadiums, the perpetrators just keep spreading the same wrong allegations with impunity. We share those feelings of hurt with our brothers and sisters in Qatar. We sympathize with them. We know how misrepresentation of one's culture and tradition can damage your reputation before the eyes of the world. Iran, for long, has been under attack by certain media outlets in the west, depicting a wrong picture of our people and culture. When we have sports officials, players and coaches visiting or working with us here, they all have the same reaction: "Our personal experience of Iran, its people, culture and religion could not be farther from the misinformation we had been fed."

How does all of this could help Qatar?

First and foremost we offer our unequivocal and categorical moral support to Qatar to host the Islamic world's first ever FIFA World Cup. This is a World Cup not only for Qatar, or West Asia, or the Middle East. It is a World Cup for the whole of Asian continent and above all the entire world's Muslim population. It is a point of honor for us in Iran. When you could see a mosque minaret in the background of a stadium on your television sets in 2022, people from Mauritania to Indonesia can immediately relate to that image. It will bring us all together.

How can Iran be involved with the actual staging of the 2022 FIFA World Cup?

Former UEFA President Michel Platini once floated the idea of the 64 games of the finals should be shared in the region. However, that idea was shut down very quickly as the finals had been granted to one country. The 32 teams participating in the finals should arrive in the host nation five days ahead of their first match by the latest. So, even offering team base camps to any of the 32 teams during the tournament in places like Dubai or our own Kish Island is not plausible, at least according to existing FIFA World Cup regulations.

So what else is left for Iran and other neighboring countries to share?

Plenty! When South Africa hosted the World Cup, all of FIFA's men competitions took place in Africa. Egypt hosted the FIFA Under-20 World Cup and Nigeria hosted the Under-17 World Cup, a tournament our Under-17 team reached the last sixteen and only bowed out 1-2 in extra time to Uruguay. And the Confederations Cup was staged in South Africa itself.

Are you suggesting that FIFA should stage all of its competitions in Asia in 2021?

Yes and why not? The World Cup host will have to stage



one test event, which is normally the Confederations Cup. In addition, FIFA will stage Under-17 and Under-20 Men's tournaments as well as the FIFA Club World Cup, the latter of which will have been staged in Japan and the United Arab Emirates between now and 2018 at any rate. So, if FIFA has four men's World Cup events in different categories, we can bid for one to give another Middle Eastern flavor, in addition to the tournament Qatar will be hosting as a test event in 2021.

Can Iran handle the demands of a large-scale international tournament?

Of course. We bid to host the expanded 24-team AFC Asian Cup in 2019. Iran and the United Arab Emirates were the final two remaining candidates. We have several stadia, refurbished or newly built, with a capacity of 40,000 plus. I do not need to remind anyone of the grandiose of Tehran's Azadi stadium, an iconic and well-known football venue around the world.

But an international tournament would require many more elements, such as appropriate infrastructure in the Tourism industry.

Our country is investing a great deal in building new hotels, purchasing new fleet for our Airline industry and without a shadow of doubt we can offer the most varied landscape anywhere in the world to visitors. Iran has been named amongst the top ten countries in the world for tourists to explore and enjoy. If we manage to be granted the hosting rights of one of those FIFA tournaments in 2021, we will promise Teams, officials and their fans a fantastic time. It will be an unforgettable experience for all. That will give fans a glimpse of what they can expect in 2022, different to anything they may have experienced before.

How different?

Firstly, the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar will be the safest tournament I can imagine, and void of any hooligan elements that you see marring the image of international football every now and again. It will be a family oriented event. Secondly, the proximity of Qatar to its neighbors will also provide fans with a great chance to explore the whole region. We want to make sure that places like the Kish Island, Shiraz and Isfahan will be on the short list of anyone going to Qatar to support their team in 2022. The beauty and mystery of Iran and short flights from Doha will be a huge plus for us.

How else can Iran benefit?

Off the field, the 2022 FIFA World Cup will bring a great deal of expertise to various parts of the football industry. As part of their legacy commitment, Qatar World Cup organizers want to train local football administrators through a program called JOSOOR. Two of our Football Federation staff have already taken advantage of these certified management courses in Doha and graduated to become highly recognized international football administrators. They are now valuable members of our staff. So, the benefits of the Middle East's first World Cup will go well beyond football and tourism.

Anything else you may want to add?

We had fruitful discussions with our Qatari colleagues. They were hugely impressed by our Football Academy. They sensed the extent of our willingness to be alongside them in their challenging journey. We also learnt how hard they have been working to reach their goals. How the have faced huge challenges in recent years. We learned how willing they are to introduce changes while preserving their rich culture and traditions. Their journey will be a long and at times arduous one. We will be alongside them in this important juncture in our region's history. The 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar will be an event that can potentially reshape relations and bring us closer together.



BEACH SOCCER

Iran maintains place as Asia's top team in fresh BSWW rankings

The Iranian men's national beach soccer team has maintained its place as the best squad in Asia in the newest edition of the Beach Soccer Worldwide (BSWW) rankings, and nestled in the world's fifth spot.



According to the latest monthly rankings released by the BSWW, the organization responsible for the founding and growth of the association football derivative sport of beach soccer, the Iranian team accumulated 1,620 points to be named Asia's top-ranked contingent.

Japan landed in the 11th slot in the global rankings and the second place in Asia with 932 points. The Japanese were followed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman teams, who occupied the 13th and 15th spots respectively with 867 and 835 points.

Portugal is the top-ranked beach soccer team in the world with 3,281 points. Russia collected 3,095 points to land in the second position. Third-place Brazilians earned 2,088 points. Italy stood fourth with 1,942 points.

On August 25, the Iranian outfit trounced the Omani contingent 6-3 in Ordos city in China's northern Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region to stand on the top of the table at the end of the first edition of the Continental Tournament in China.

The Iranian team exerted a spell of pressure on Omanis' goal from the beginning of the game, and defender Amir Hossein Akbari was on target four times to put the ball at the back of the opponent's net and score a double brace, also known as a haul.

Seyyed Ali Nazem and Payman Hosseini added a goal each for the Iranian team against Oman.

The first edition of the Continental Tournament started in Ordos on August 23 and wrapped up on August 25.

The tournament served as a warm-up event for the participating teams prior to the 5th edition of Asian Beach Games, which will open in the south-central Vietnamese city of Da Nang on September 24, and will run until October 3.

The competing countries in the first edition of the Continental Tournament also had an eye on the Asian qualification tournament for the 2017 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup, whose date and venue are yet to be announced.

The 2017 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup, which will mark the ninth edition of the international sports event, will be played from April 27 to May 7 in the Bahamian capital city of Nassau.

(Source: PressTV)

Iranian wushu fighters clinch two silver medals in Asia contests

Iranian male practitioners have been awarded two silver medals at the 9th edition of Asian Wushu Championships in Taiwan.

The Iranian athletes produced praiseworthy displays of physical and mental skills.

On Saturday, Reza Khalafzadeh pocketed 9.66 points to claim the silver medal in the Jianshu form of Taolu competitions at the indoor Taoyuan Arena in the north-western Taiwanese city of Taoyuan, and followed a representative from Macau with 9.67 points.

A contestant from Malaysia notched up 9.64 points to collect the bronze.

Jianshu is a form of Taolu, where the participant uses a sword as the main element of the routine.

Later in the day, Farshad Arabi got 9.68 points to grab the silver in the Nandao form of Taolu competitions.

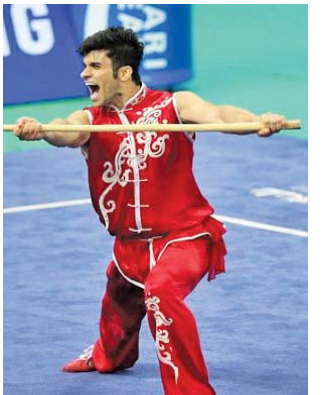
The Iranian athlete trailed an opponent from China who managed to accumulate 9.70 points. A competitor from the host nation racked up 9.67 points to stand behind Arabi.

Nandao is a kind of sword that is used mostly in contemporary Chinese wushu exercises and forms.

Nandao is mostly used two-handed due to its larger amount of weight as compared to the "northern broadsword," or Beidao. It also has a large metal cross guard useful in deflecting blows and hooking the opponent's weapon.

The 9th edition of Asian Wushu Championships started in Taoyuan on September 1 and will run until September 5, 2016.

(Source: PressTV)



Iran Greco-Roman coach Mohammad Bana quits



S P O R T S Iran Greco-Roman coach Mohammad Bana resigned from his post on Saturday. Bana, who inspired the Iran Greco-Roman wrestling team to win the championship at the London Olympic Games (winning three gold medals) couldn't repeat his successful campaign four years later as his team managed to win just two bronze medals. After the particularly poor perfor-

mance of his team at Rio 2016 Olympics and the surprising elimination of Iranian wrestlers (including Hamid Sourian) one after another, he said he feel "ashamed" toward them and was seen sitting and crying outside the wrestling stadium, the video and photos of which went viral in social media.

He was later quoted as saying he cried because he failed to make the people happy, and that the team is like "his child".

Bastian Schweinsteiger left out of Man United's Europa League squad



Bastian Schweinsteiger has been left out of Manchester United's Europa League squad by coach Jose Mourinho, as the midfielder continues to be marginalized at the club.

World Cup winner Schweinsteiger signed a three-year deal at United last year after moving to Old Trafford from Bayern Munich, but has failed to feature under Mourinho since the Portuguese coach replaced Louis van Gaal this summer. Having made 18 league appearanc-

es last season, the 32-year-old appears to have no future at United and has been training with the reserve team after Mourinho confirmed that it would be "very difficult" for him to play for the club again.

The transfer window closed with Schweinsteiger still with United, although his chances of featuring under Mourinho appear slim, particularly after he was overlooked for the 27-man Europa League squad released by UEFA on Saturday. (Source: Reuters)



Poem of the day

A FLOWER-TINTED cheek, the flowery close
Of the fair earth, these are enough for me.
Hafez

Prayer Times

Noon:13:03 Evening: 7:46 Dawn: 5:13 (tomorrow) Sunrise: 6:39 (tomorrow)

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NEWS IN BRIEF



Masters of Persian calligraphy to hold exhibit in Washington

TEHRAN — The U.S.-Iran People Friendship Society (UIPFS) will be displaying works by masters of calligraphy at the Exhibit 9 Gallery in Washington opening on September 11, 2016.

Entitled "Words Symphony II," works by masters Amir-Ahmad Falsafi, Sedaqat Jabari, Elaheh Khatami, and Mahmud Zendeherudi will be on display at the exhibit until October 2, the UIPFS has announced on its website.

The exhibit is a good chance to promote peace and friendship between people of Iran and America.



Tehran museum to screen "Brazil"

TEHRAN — The U.S.-based British director Terry Gilliam's 1985 sci-fi movie "Brazil" will go on screen today at 4 p.m. at the cinematheque of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art.

Starring Jonathan Pryce and Robert De Niro, "Brazil" is about Sam Lowry, a young man who tries to find a woman who appears in his dreams while he is living in a dystopian world in which there is an over-reliance on poorly maintained machines.



"Starless Dreams" to compete in Message to Man festival

TEHRAN — Iranian director Mehrdad Oskui's "Starless Dreams" will go on screen at the 26th edition of Message to Man International Film Festival, which will be held in Saint Petersburg, Russia from September 23 to 30.

The acclaimed documentary shows young women in an Iranian juvenile detention center reflecting on the crimes they have committed and the harsh circumstances that have shaped their lives.

NEWS

"Star Trek" turns 50

NEW YORK (Reuters) — Star Trek fans flocked to "Star Trek: Mission" in New York on Friday, on the first day of a three-day convention honoring the sci-fi franchise's 50th anniversary.

"Star Trek" is all about the community and the fans are a real important part of that. I'm a fan and if I wasn't on this side of the table I would probably be on that side," said actor LeVar Burton who played Lt. Commander Geordi La Forge in "Star Trek: The Next Generation."

Also in attendance was Adam Nimoy, the son of late actor Leonard Nimoy, best known for playing Spock in the franchise. Adam Nimoy will share details about his new documentary "For the Love of Spock" during panel sessions during the event. The father and son began working on the film in November 2014 as a way to mark the upcoming milestone of the show and a chance to bond. Leonard Nimoy died in February 2015.

"The strain on the relationship with my dad was really a factor of popularity of Spock - the public reaction to Spock. I mean I couldn't be out with him in public with him anymore, we'd be mobbed, just so much attention, so many people attracted to Spock and dad's so easily recognizable. So as a young kid is was very difficult because I had trouble connecting to him," Adam Nimoy said.

"I think he would be very happy with the end product that we came up with, we worked very hard."

Actor Liev Schreiber takes 800 punches to make boxer drama credible

VENICE (Reuters) — Liev Schreiber took around 800 punches when filming «The Bleeder» to make the boxing drama more credible and to not upset the prize fighter whose real life story it portrayed, the U.S. actor said at the Venice film festival on Friday.

The movie, based on the life of Chuck Wepner who almost went fifteen rounds with world heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali, is one of several movies screening in the out of competition section in Venice.

Schreiber said he does not like doing biographical films because of the comparisons that are made and the danger is even bigger playing a prize fighter, especially if he is still alive.

"Fortunately Chuck likes the movie and appreciates my efforts, otherwise I could be in big trouble," he told a press conference.

Director Philippe Falardeau said he was not convinced by boxing movies where cameras hide the punches or their absence.

Tehran Municipality to establish museum for surrealist Iran Darrudi

TEHRAN — The Tehran Municipality has allocated a large area to establish a museum to embrace works by the renowned Iranian surrealist painter Iran Darrudi.

Plans are for the museum to be established in Tehran's Yusefabad district, an expensive area in Tehran, Persian media reported on Saturday.

"The area belongs to Tehran Municipality, but I am going to pay for the construction of the museum, and prominent architect Jahangir Darvishi will cooperate in this project as the designer," Darrudi said at the ceremony held at the location of the museum on Thursday.

"I will continue my art for Iran and the people of Iran and I will prove that, although I am not a mother in the real world, I am the mother of all the nation of Iran. This museum will become a cultural center of Iran and future generations will become familiar with the art of Iran and the world at this location," she added.

The 80-year-old artist hoped that the museum would turn into a non-governmental center so that the new generation would learn more about different perspectives, and help elevate the people of Iran to the position that they deserve.

The director of Iran's Museums and Historical Properties Office, Mohammadreza Kargar who also attended the ceremony, said that the people of Iran are proud of their country, since it is a broad society with talented artists who have helped save and protect the art and culture of this land.

"One of these great artists has chosen her best artworks to present to the people and this is a good chance to remember the name of Iran Darrudi over the years. She has always wanted to establish a venue with her own funds to donate her works to the people," he added.

Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art Director Majid Mollanoruzi, Iranian Artists Forum Director Majid Rajabi-Memar and Tehran Municipality official Pejman Pashmchizadeh also attended the ceremony.



A painting by Iran Darrudi

The museum will be a multifunctional foundation with various art and cultural activities.

Iran Darrudi was born in 1936. She studied art at Ecole Superier des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the history of art at the Ecole du Louvre in Paris, stained glass at the Royal Academy of Brussels, and television direction and production at the RCA Institute in New York.

Darrudi's first solo exhibition was held in Miami in 1958 at the invitation of the Florida State Art Center.

An exhibition featuring 207 of Darrudi's masterpieces opened at the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art in May 2008.

A selection of her works was shown at Tehran's Shirin Gallery in 2009.

"Madama Butterfly" inspires collection by Iranian photographer

TEHRAN — "Madama Butterfly", an opera by Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), has inspired Iranian photographer Mehdi Mansuri's new collection of photo collages bearing the same title.

The collection composed of 16 works measuring 85x60 focuses on life, consciousness and death, announced Tehran's Golestan Gallery, which plans to

showcase the works in an exhibition that will open on September 9.

Artistic figures like Leili Golestan, the owner of the gallery, and celebrities such as actress Elnaz Shakerdust are the subjects in some of the works.

Apart from "Birth" and "Consciousness", other works of the collection have been created by using the "reflection technique". In

this method, the photographer took photos of the objects reflected through shattered mirrors.

Mansuri has also used golden frames for his works to recollect works by the Irish-born British figurative painter Francis Bacon (1909-1992).

The exhibition will run until September 14 at the gallery located at 34 Kamasaj St. in the Darus neighborhood.



A photo collage from Mehdi Mansuri's series "Madama Butterfly"

PICTURE OF THE DAY Honaronline/Hassan Motahhari



The London-based Iranian-Armenian painter Edman Aivazian (L) speaks with Deputy Culture Minister for Artistic Affairs Ali Moradkhani (R) and Niavaran Cultural Center Director Seyyed Abbas Sajjadi after the opening of his showing at the center in Tehran on September 3, 2016. The exhibition titled "Colors of the Homeland" runs until September 10.

Hollywood studios, football leagues urge EU rethink on copyright

BRUSSELS (Reuters) — The heads of some of the biggest Hollywood studios, commercial broadcasters and European football leagues have urged the European Union to reconsider a planned copyright overhaul they fear will lead to lower investment in films and TV shows.

In a letter to the presidents of the European Commission, European Council and European Parliament, they warn that

the EU's plans to help make more films and TV shows available online across borders will have "severe negative impacts on our industry and incentives to invest, which would stunt economic growth and innovation for years to come."

The Commission, the EU executive, wants to make it easier for broadcasters like the BBC and Canal Plus to show their content online across the 28-nation bloc by

allowing them to clear the rights solely in their home country.

But many broadcasters, film producers as well as the sports industry are fiercely opposed, arguing that it will dilute the value of exclusive rights and undermine the industry's financing model.

Films and TV shows are often financed by selling exclusive distribution rights on a country-by-country basis to secure

investment.

The CEOs of companies including Fox Network Groups, NBCUniversal, broadcasters Sky and Mediaset and the British, French, Italian, German and Spanish football leagues said the planned reform "represents a significant, unjustified and detrimental incursion into rights owners' and broadcasters' freedom to exploit their intellectual property rights."

Artists to raise funds for children with cancer

TEHRAN — An exhibition of visual arts by contemporary artists opened at Tehran's Milad Tower on Friday to raise funds for children with cancer.

Entitled "Color of Love II", the exhibit has been organized by Mahak Charity Society, a Tehran-based major medical center for safeguarding children with cancer.

"This exhibit has been set up to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the center," director of Mahak Arasb Ahmadian said at the opening ceremony.

He added that the works donated to the center over the past 25 years have also been put on display in this exhibit.

Ahmadian also expressed thanks to the artists who have always been available to help children with cancer.

The exhibit will be running until Friday September 9.